

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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## 1st African-American president of SBC elected – Fred Luter Jr.

**T**he moment had been anticipated for more than a year and all eyes were watching, waiting — the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) would soon elect its first African-American president.

When Fred Luter Jr. was elected first vice president in 2011, the possibility turned to near certainty.

The day finally arrived — June 19, opening day of the 2012 SBC annual meeting, election day. Messengers arrived with an air of excitement.

News media outlets — local, state and national — flocked to the scene, claiming their spots hours before they

would even receive the first sound bite from Luter.

Then it was time. A packed convention floor of messengers could hardly contain themselves in what would become “an amazing” display of affirmation for Luter.

The three-minute nomination speech by David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans, seemed like hours as he presented his case for Luter in a conductor-style build up, allowing emotions to crescendo along the way.

“Let’s give our ballots a voice and shout out to the world: Jesus is Lord! This is our president! We are Southern Baptists!”

And they did. Jumping to their feet in an extended time of applause, cheers and whistles, emotions ran high. Many wiped away tears, including Luter.

“I’ve never been on this large of a stage. ... I ... am excited about the opportunity to lead this convention,” Luter said later. “I promise ... to do everything I can to represent you and the Kingdom well.”

Also elected were:

First vice president — Nathan Lino, pastor of Northeast Houston Baptist Church, Humble, Texas.

Second vice president — Dave Miller, pastor of Southern Hills Baptist Church, Sioux City, Iowa. (TAB)

## Alabama Baptists tapped to serve in SBC roles

**A**labama Baptists were among Southern Baptists elected to serve on various trustee boards and the Committee on Nominations during the June 19–20 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans.

Serving on the 2012–13 Committee on Nominations will be Carol Dees Gilbreath, member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and Travis Coleman Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville. Members of the Committee on Nominations were selected by the 2012 Committee on Committees, which was chaired by Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville. Also serving on the committee was Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea.

Elected to serve on trustee boards are:

► James W. (Jim) Averett, layperson and member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, to serve on the Executive Committee with term to expire in 2016.

► Kenneth J. Burnham, layperson and member of Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, replacing Robert E. Jackson, Decatur, who declined to serve a second term on the trustee board of IMB with term to expire in 2016.

► Richard L. Richie, pastor of Flint Baptist Church, Decatur, to serve a second term on the IMB trustee board.

► Charles C. (Craig) Carlisle, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, to serve a second term on the trustee board of LifeWay Christian Resources.

► Michael E. (Mike) Shaw, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, to serve on the board of New Orleans Seminary with term to expire in 2017.

► Ben O. Character, layperson and member of Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, to serve on the board of Midwestern Seminary with term to expire in 2017. (TAB)

For a full report of the SBC annual meeting and related meetings, see pages 3, 5-10 and 19.



# COMMENT

## A Glass Half Full or a Glass Half Empty?

The 7,868 messengers registered for the June 19–20 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) made several important decisions, even historic decisions. The question is whether these decisions indicate the Southern Baptist glass is half full or half empty.

For example, when outgoing president Bryant Wright called for a name change of the SBC late last year, he believed it would serve as a rallying cry for missions. He hoped the Great Commission Resurgence, with its renewed emphasis on evangelism in the neighborhoods of this country as well as the nations of the world, would cause Southern Baptists to be willing to change their name to something more appealing to those living outside the Deep South.

### A compromise

The resulting recommendation kept the historic name of Southern Baptist Convention but added a descriptor — Great Commission Baptists. The compromise was thought to satisfy those attached to the historic name but give those wanting a different identity an approved alternative.

It did not. Only 53 percent of the messengers supported adding the descriptor. While that was enough for the new phrase to be adopted, it meant that nearly half the messengers did not want the name changed in any way. The vote reflected what an earlier poll by LifeWay Christian Resources found — Southern Baptists are split right down the middle on this issue.

What was supposed to be a unifier became another point of tension in Baptist life. Those who want to use the term may do so (as if they needed permission). Others view the whole debate with suspicion, asking “Is this just the proverbial camel’s nose under the tent?” Those suspicions were not abated last February when speakers noted that if 20 years from now Baptists wanted to change the convention’s name, approving the recommended descriptor now would make the process easier and less expensive.

In February some entities indicated they would move immediately to use the Great Commission Baptist phrase if approved by messengers. Since its use is voluntary by churches and SBC entities, as emphasized repeatedly during the recent discussion, and since the vote was so close, it will be interesting to see how quickly the new phrase is used. Few churches would build a new building or make other major changes with only 53 percent of the people approving.



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

The whole debate leaves one asking if the new descriptor is a glass half full or a glass half empty.

The election of African-American pastor Fred Luter Jr. as president was the single most moving moment of the convention, judging from the reaction of the messengers.

When the vote was cast messengers cheered with several waves of prolonged applause and shouts. Tears welled in the eyes of many. It was a historic moment as messengers tried to say something about the future of the SBC and about themselves as well as express their confidence in the New Orleans pastor.

While the percentage of African-American messengers will never be known, there were certainly a higher percentage of African-Americans participating in the annual meeting than in any recent time. Even Luter’s announced nomination for the SBC highest office sent positive messages to people about Southern Baptists.

At the same time private conversations often referenced the racially charged words of Richard Land in the days leading up to the annual meeting. Land apologized for his statements and was disciplined by the directors of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. But Land kept his job of representing Southern Baptists on the national stage about moral and ethical issues.

### ‘Swept under the rug’

Some African-American pastors asked if anything had really changed among Southern Baptists. They said that in the secular world statements like those made by Land would result in immediate termination. Among Southern Baptists, Land is slapped on the wrist and the statements are “swept under the rug.”

Is this whole episode a sign the Southern Baptist glass of race relations is half full or half empty?

Messengers celebrated that both the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Mis-

sions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions grew in the number of dollars received over the previous year. The growth was small in percentages but the total dollars were up.

At the same time, messengers adopted a 2012–2013 Cooperative Program (CP) budget that is about 2.2 percent smaller than the current CP budget. Since CP is the cornerstone for Great Commission Giving, does that indicate support for missions at home and around the world is a glass half full or a glass half empty?

Messengers tried to sidestep increasing conflict over the role of Calvinism. Wright courageously tackled the issue in his president’s address and called for traditional Southern Baptists and Calvinistic Baptists to step away from conflict.

Messengers approved a resolution declaring the Baptist Faith and Message statement of salvation provides sufficient parameters to allow both groups to work together in convention life.

Yet SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Frank Page announced he would call together a group of influential Southern Baptists to help find a way for traditional Southern Baptists and Calvinistic Baptists to work together.

During elections, one of the authors of the recent statement of traditional understanding of salvation was defeated for convention office by a candidate

whose nomination emphasized trying to keep Southern Baptists unified in missions efforts.

Does all of this signal the glass of cooperation is half full or half empty?

Even the number of participants raises this question. For the first time since the end of World War II, Baptists failed to break the 8,000-messenger mark when meeting in a Southern city. And that in a year when a new president was elected and a controversial recommendation (the new descriptor — see story, page 3) was on the agenda. Either one of those items normally ensures a large attendance. Only 610 Alabama Baptists registered as messengers, a surprisingly low number.

The election of an African-American president drew national attention from news media but a surprisingly low participation of messengers.

Again, is this because the Southern Baptist glass is half full or half empty?

Many good things came out of the recent convention. But only time will tell if the actions point that the glass of denominational life is being filled or being drained. My prayer is that it is being filled.

For additional coverage of the SBC annual meeting, visit [www.sbcannualmeeting.net](http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net).



**The Alabama Baptist**  
will not publish an issue July 5.  
The next available issue will be July 12.



"If ye continue in my word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."  
John 8:31-32

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BP photo

**DESCRIPTOR APPROVED** — Nearly 8,000 messengers were registered to vote June 19 on the descriptor 'Great Commission Baptists' at the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans, but only 4,824 votes were cast. The descriptor received 53 percent of the votes.

# 'Great Commission Baptists'

## New SBC descriptor approved by messengers at annual meeting

The descriptor "Great Commission Baptists" was approved by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) by a vote of 53 percent to 46 percent after nearly a half-hour debate June 19 at the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

According to results announced Wednesday morning, 4,824 ballots were cast: 2,546 were in favor of the descriptor and 2,232 were not in favor of the descriptor. Forty-six ballots were disallowed. At the time of the vote, 7,831 messengers were registered.

The measure survived some parliamentary maneuvering.

Richard Tribble Jr., a messenger from Emmanuel Baptist Church, Decatur, Ill., opposed consideration of the recommendation, calling it "divisive in nature, character and application."

Barry McCarty, the convention's chief parliamentarian, explained that if two-thirds of the messengers voted against considering the recommendation, discussion would cease. Debate continued after the vote.

Carroll Vaughn, a messenger from First Baptist Church, Bloomfield, N.M., made a motion that it be tabled indefinitely.

"We don't need to sit around and argue about changing a name when we're not going to change our name anyway," Vaughn said. "Let's be about the Great Commission and let the world describe us as people that turn the world upside down, not as people that sit around and argue about what we're going to call ourselves."

Vaughn's motion was ruled out of order.

In debate over the descriptor, Aaron Harvie, pastor of Riverside Community Church, Philadelphia, Pa., and a member of the task force that studied the issue, said he was sent by Southern Baptists to plant a church among people "who greatly misunderstand who Southern Baptists are."

"This opportunity that stands before us just gives us as church planters and people outside

of the South an opportunity to build bridges to share Jesus," Harvie told messengers. "As a planter and as a person living outside the South, I beg you as Southern Baptists to help us to continue to build bridges to share Jesus."

Susie Hawkins, a messenger from Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas, and a member of the task force, spoke from the floor to "remind the messengers that this is not a theological or doctrinal issue."

"This is an issue of preference, and our brothers and sisters in Christ in these pioneer areas in diverse communities and churches have indicated to us that this particular descriptor would be extremely helpful to them, and I would urge us all in the spirit of Romans 14 to do everything we can to advance the kingdom of God and vote for this motion," Hawkins said.

Among opponents of the Great Commission Baptists descriptor, Bob Cleveland, a messenger from First Baptist Church, Pelham, said Southern Baptists have failed in their effort to disciple the nation because "about 10 million" of the members on the convention's church rolls "are not coming to church."

"We are not Great Commission Baptists," he said.

Gary Hunnicutt, a messenger from First Baptist Church, Benton, Ark., said, "We have a much longer history of doing good than we did of supporting slavery. We have a good name, a good brand."

Chris Roberts, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Panama City, Fla., asked for clarification regarding whether SBC entities would "be encouraged to adopt this alternative name on things such as letter-

head, publications, literature such as that." Jimmy Draper, chairman of the name change task force, told messengers the goal from the outset "was to remove any barrier to the effective proclamation of the gospel in reaching people for Christ."

"Be very sure you understand this recommendation ... does not obligate any person, any church, any Baptist entity to do anything," Draper said before discussion began.

In the end, messengers approved the recommendation from the SBC Executive Committee that "those churches, entities and organizations in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention" which desire to use a descriptor other than "Southern Baptists" to indicate their involvement in the convention consider using Great Commission Baptists.

The legal name of the convention will remain "Southern Baptist Convention."

In February the Executive Committee approved the recommendation brought by SBC President Bryant Wright who had appointed a task force to advise him on the possibility of changing the name of the SBC.

Based on their advice, Wright brought a recommendation to the Executive Committee that the convention keep its name but adopt the informal, nonlegal descriptor "Great Commission Baptists" to be used by any church that wishes to use it.

K. Marshall Williams, chairman of the Southern Baptist African American Advisory Council, said before the convention the adoption of the descriptor would be a step in the right direction and could improve the SBC's effectiveness in Kingdom building. (BP)



DRAPER

# Across Alabama's Associations

## BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will hold a men's cake auction and wings silent auction July 15. For information call 205-425-4381. Morgan Bailey is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Argo Church, Trussville**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary July 15 during homecoming July 15, 11 a.m. Ken Maddox is pastor. ► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will hold "Sunday Night Revival" July 1, 6 p.m., with Mark Smith, pastor of Eastside Church, Birmingham. The theme will be "Do you know where you will spend Eternity?" Dale Creel is pastor.

## CAHABA

► **Hopewell Church, Marion**, will hold revival services July 8-11. Phil Winningham, state missionary with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will speak each night. Joe Bob Mizzell is pastor.

## COLUMBIA

► **Bluff Springs Church, Ashford**, will celebrate homecoming July 15 with the theme "Heaven."

Former church pastor Barry Holcomb will speak and Kyle Luke will lead worship. A meal will be provided by church members. Dennis K. Singletary is pastor.

## ETOWAH

► **Mat Alexander** is the new pastor of **First Church, Gadsden**. Alexander graduated from the University of Mobile with a double major in theology and humanities. He currently attends Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Alexander most recently served as pastor of Sunny-



ALEXANDER

side Church, Shepherdsville, Ky. He and his wife, Whitney, have one child.

## MARION

► **Charles A. Ballew** will retire as pastor of **First Church, Winfield**, in July after 25 years of service. He served more than 54 years in full-time ministry. A retirement

celebration in his honor will be July 14.

## FRANKLIN

► **William (Bill) Harper III** is the new pastor of **First Church, Red Bay**. He holds a master of divinity degree from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He previously served as pastor of Central Church, Florence; Siluria Church, Ala-



HARPER

baster; and Corinth East Church, Joppa. He and his wife, Amanda, have three children.

## NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Harold Fanning** is interim pastor of **First Church, Mount Olive**. He served interim pastorates at Mays Memorial Church, Athens, and Springdale Church, Tarrant. ☞

## Phenix City's Bethany to expand facilities

After three years in their new church building, Bethany Baptist Church, Phenix City, is planning to build a family life center to continue to grow the church and bring people to Christ.

"We have sustained a good growth since we have moved in the new facility," Pastor Jimmie Hobbs said.

"So we decided to build the family life center because we are in need of more space."

According to Hobbs, the center will have two buildings: one for a gymnasium and another for education rooms.

The education building is expected to be about 5,000 square feet with seven classrooms and a fellowship area.

"We don't have plans for the gymnasium yet, though we expect

it to be about 10,000 square feet," Hobbs said.

The former Bethany Baptist building is less than a mile from the newer church home. During the 16 months of relocation the Russell Baptist Association church spent the first year leasing space in a vacant church building and the final four months sharing space with North Phenix Baptist Church, Phenix City.

### Recent growth

Hobbs said he believes the recent growth can be attributed to several factors that include a number of families moving into the area.

Rachel Miller, administrative assistant for Bethany Baptist, joined the church with her husband in March 2012. She said the church

has 240 active members and an average of 175 to 200 worshipping on Sunday mornings. Ten years ago, the church had 38 active members.

Through the years of growth, the church has expanded to two services: a 9:30 a.m. traditional service and an 11 a.m. contemporary service.

Younger people seem to really enjoy the contemporary service, which draws almost twice the attendees of the traditional service, Hobbs said.

When Hobbs was selected as pastor his goal was to see Bethany Baptist grow, and he feels blessed to see that happening.

Currently the church is fundraising for the facility and examining plans. They hope to break ground in the next year.

(Brittney Knox, TAB intern)

## Lineville Baptist hosts VBS for nearby church

Lineville Baptist Church in Carley Baptist Association hosted Vacation Bible School (VBS) on its campus for Berea Baptist Church, Heflin, during the week of June 11.

The partnership began between Lineville Baptist and Berea Baptist, a predominately Hispanic church in Cleburne Baptist Association, to grant its members a way to engage in the gospel through VBS fun and recreation.

"We enjoy the partnership we have with the Berea Baptist Church," said C.J. Andrews, associate pastor of Lineville Baptist.

Lineville Baptist member Barbara DeCoursey taught the preschool class with the week's theme of God being all-powerful.

"We taught them about miracles and what God is capable of doing in our lives," she said.

### Three missions trips

DeCoursey has traveled on three missions trips to Mexico and is fluent in Spanish. She was able to teach the preschoolers in Spanish.

She recalls the initial connection of the two churches when she and some other members began to teach

English to Spanish speaking individuals and met some of the members of Berea Baptist.

"One of the girls that I taught was baptized at my church," she said. "That was so awesome to see."

During the four-day VBS, Lineville's church bus provided transportation for children to and from the church. The VBS included crafts, a lesson and supper.

In the preschool class, DeCoursey said the attendance grew every night, reaching 15 students by week's end.

(Brittney Knox, TAB intern)

## Alabama updates

### People, churches making news across the state

#### Randolph Association centers thrive despite recession

The recent economic turbulence has taken a toll on Randolph County but has not impacted Randolph Baptist Association's two Christian Service Centers, said Clayton Scott, interim director of missions for the association.

"Before the recession we were \$30,000 in debt, and now we have more money in the bank than what we owed before," Scott said.

Located in Wedowee and Roanoke, both centers are open at least three days a week and are staffed by a minimum of two volunteers at a time. The Christian Service Centers accept donations of clothes, shoes, appliances and furniture and resell them at a low price. The profits then go back into the community in one of two ways. Some of the money goes to those in need of extra help with bills, which is designated by center director Abby Phipps. The other portion goes into the Hunger Food Account. The centers direct at least \$125 into this account every week to purchase food to give to those in need.

This ministry affects families in Randolph and Clay counties and Heard County in Georgia. In April the centers helped 152 families and 290 individuals with food, household items, clothing, bills and personal items. The two centers, which have been serving the area for more than 20 years, would not be thriving without the support of Randolph Association churches and individuals who refer those in need and donate clothing, food, furniture, time and money to the ministry, Scott said.

The Christian Service Centers are more than just clothes closets or food banks, he added. They are ministries intended to bring people to Christ. "Every customer is approached with the gospel," he said. "Every bag of food goes out with tracts and every person who volunteers is trained in presenting the gospel." (Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

#### East Liberty Association to host annual D-Now event

East Liberty Baptist Association will host its annual Disciple Now event Aug. 3-5 at Happy Valley Baptist Church, Lanett.

Disciple Now, a national concept hosted by many Alabama Baptist churches and some associations, is known to many as D-Now. It is a youth event including missions projects, speakers, breakout sessions and worship services. The event, which caters to seventh grade through college, is open to all churches in the association.

D-Now typically draws about 250 students across the association, and on average about 10 churches participate. Speakers, worship led by singer Kevin Derryberry and missions projects will all be available for D-Now participants throughout the weekend.

On Aug. 4 participants will take part in a missions project that usually occurs in the local area. The project may include light construction, roofing and yard work.

First Baptist Church, Valley, has participated in D-Now since 2004 and will send about 30 participants to the event. Tim Andrews, interim pastor and associate pastor of families and students for First, Valley, said his church enjoys being a part of D-Now and the missions projects. He added D-Now is typically conducted earlier in the year, but this one is offered in August as a way to hopefully send students back to school on a spiritual high note. "The students gain a lot from the hands-on missions work," he said. "They also are challenged by the speakers to be faithful in their relationship with Christ." (Brittney Knox, TAB intern)

#### Cherokee Association churches bring back VBS

Bethel Baptist Church, Centre, and Farill Baptist Church, Cedar Bluff, in Cherokee Baptist Association brought back Vacation Bible School (VBS) after decades of absence. It has been more than 25 years since Bethel Baptist's last VBS, while Farill Baptist's most recent VBS "predates everyone's memories," said Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Association. Both took place in June.

Patricia Lively, VBS director at Farill, said the church decided to participate in VBS after Cherokee Association had a promotional clinic in January. "I have always been a firm believer in getting kids to church, and this is a great tool for reaching unchurched kids," Lively said. "We're small, but we're looking for God to do big things."

A team from First Baptist Church, Centre, was set to assist Farill with the worship rally and decorations. Cherokee Association supplied the teaching materials. "We're all coming together for one purpose — to get kids involved and get them to know God," Lively said.

Bethel Pastor Al McMullan said VBS has "a special place" in his heart because that is where he was saved when he was young.

Both churches have been spreading the word throughout their communities and were preparing to minister to approximately 50 children. (Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

# Fueling missions tasks

## Executive Committee president Page explains current state, need of Cooperative Program

**S**outhern Baptist messengers gathered at their annual meeting in New Orleans June 19–20 approved a \$7.5 million Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) operating budget and \$181.9 million Cooperative Program (CP) allocation budget for 2012–13. This is \$4.1 million less than the previous year's CP allocation budget, indicating a move away from the traditional method of basing the new budget on previous year's receipts. In a time of declining budgets, allocations to entities were unrealistic, which created budgets that are unsustainable, a spokesperson for the SBC Executive Committee said at a separate meeting prior to the vote on the budget.

In the operating budget, a total of \$2.6 million is budgeted for SBC administration expenses and \$4.9 million is allocated toward operating expenses for the Executive Committee. The CP allocation budget directs \$137.2 million to ministries through the convention's two missions entities, \$41.6 million to theological education through six seminaries and \$3.1 million to concerns about ethics and religious liberty.

Frank Page, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, used a World War II analogy during his report to warn that the CP, which fuels SBC missions and ministry, is running low.

### 'We're running out of fuel'

A student of history, Page said the Germans were defeated in the Battle of the Bulge after a solid start because they ran out of fuel.

"Their machines stopped working. They were technologically very superior, but they couldn't go anywhere. Their tanks became sitting targets for our tanks and our soldiers," Page said.

He then told messengers: "We're running out of fuel in the Southern Baptist Convention. The fuel for a Great Commission Advance, which is what I would like for us to see happen, is the fuel of the Cooperative Program."

Southern Baptists can talk about missions and even summon the resolve to engage in missions, he said, but without providing fuel for the missions task, the Great Commission will be left to someone else.

"We need a rally point that is both bibli-

cally based and historically faithful, and we believe that is the Cooperative Program," Page said. That is why, he said, Southern Baptists must heed "God's call to be a tithing body of believers."

Page called for individuals throughout the convention to commit to a 10 percent tithe of their income for the cause of advancing the Kingdom of Christ.

"When the average American Southern Baptist mirrors the culture and gives 2.3 percent of his or her income to causes that would be considered charitable or church-related, we're never going to be able to impact the lostness of the world like we ought," Page said. "So I'm calling for a 10 percent tithe on the part of our people."

During the past year, 15 percent of churches in the convention have expressed specific interest in Page's 1 Percent Challenge, he said, referring to increasing gifts through the



BP photo

Frank Page, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, gives the second part of his report June 19 during the first day of the two-day SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

CP by 1 percentage point of their budgets.

Page said the CP enables Southern Baptists to diversify their missions investments by supporting ministry on the local, state, national and international levels.

### Giving through CP

"We no longer talk about giving [through] the Cooperative Program. We talk about giving to missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program. We want you to hear that distinction very well," Page said.

Messengers also approved items that impact the internal operations of the convention:

- ▶ Approved a request from the North American Mission Board to adopt fiscal year Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

- ▶ Adopted revised Convention Site and Housing Guidelines for annual meetings, reducing the number of necessary hotel rooms

to 4,000 and the number of minimum hotel rooms within two miles of the convention center contracted for the annual meeting to 1,500. Both figures were reduced by 500.

- ▶ Adopted the 2016–17 SBC calendar of activities.

In other convention business, 19 motions were presented by messengers and all but one were referred to SBC entities or ruled out of order. Entities will report on those referred during the 2013 SBC annual meeting in Houston, Texas.

The motion not referred would have prohibited messengers from using a platform microphone when debating motions or making nominations as a way to "increase the fairness" of convention deliberations. The motion was defeated on a show of ballots.

(Compiled from BP stories, TAB contributed)

## Hunter Street participates in Crossover 2012



BP photo

**V**olunteers from Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, pass out free meals during a block party in New Orleans as part of Crossover on June 16. Hunter Street's youth choir and band also performed.

Crossover is an evangelistic event coordinated by the North American Mission Board, local associations and churches that precedes the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

This year churches hosted 38 block parties around metro New Orleans as well as doing door-to-door evangelism and other special events.

Hunter Street's volunteers joined efforts with Celebration Church in New Orleans and were among more than 1,500 volunteers from 59 churches that helped at least 870 people make decisions for Christ.

(TAB)



President's Address

BP photo

**AVOID 'THEOLOGICAL IDOLATRY'** — Bryant Wright Jr., pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga., and outgoing president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), gives the president's address during the afternoon session June 19 of the two-day SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

## 'Elephant in room'

### Wright exhorts Baptists to unity

The "elephant in the room" in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is the tension between "traditional" Southern Baptists and "Calvinists," SBC President Bryant Wright said in his message at the SBC annual meeting June 19 in New Orleans.

Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga., for more than 30 years, said church planting was not "cool" in his early days and traditional worship was "the only game in town."

"It was also the time when there was an intensity of conflict within our denomination over the inerrancy of the Word of God," Wright said.

"Thankfully," he continued, "Southern Baptist Christians led this convention to do something no other denomination had ever done before — return to biblical orthodoxy after there had been a wayward turn to the left. And for that we are still forever grateful and must be ever vigilant."

Several decades ago a Pentecostal or charismatic movement also impacted many churches in the convention, Wright said. That too, after some time, "eventually died away." Then came the "worship wars" that continue to plague many churches, Wright said. "The fact is that all kinds of worship styles are very appropriate as long as they are Christ-centered and biblically based," he said.

"Today the tension has to do with Calvinism or Reformed theology," Wright said. "Months ago ... the Holy Spirit convicted me that I needed to address this elephant in the room. Little did I know that it would be such a hot topic today."

Wright said he is concerned that Christ-

centered, Bible-believing Southern Baptists will be so engaged in correcting one another's theological views when it comes to election and salvation that they will be detracted from their mission of rescuing captives who need to be liberated by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"These two views on election and salvation can coexist as long as we stay Christ-centered and biblically based in our theology," Wright said.

**"It is time to show some respect to those who have differing views."**

**Bryant Wright  
outgoing SBC president**

"So a word to these two groups: to our Calvinist friends, a bit of humility would be most welcome. Anytime there is spiritual pride or intellectual pride or theological pride — it is always a sin. And an attitude of superiority ... is never going to build up the church of Jesus Christ. A little humility would be appreciated.

"To those who call themselves traditional Southern Baptists, the time for being judgmental is over, because judgmentalism quickly moves into slander. And to lump all those who have a strong biblically based theology that is a more Reformed theology into hyper-Calvinism is not only misguided, but it ends up causing you to break the ninth commandment on false witness.

"It is time to show some respect to those who have differing views when it comes to election and when it comes to salvation," Wright said.

The central focus of the Old Testament and the New Testament, Wright said, is Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection. Those who are more committed to their theological position than to Jesus Christ are guilty of "theological idolatry," he said. (BP)

# 'An issue

## Calvinists, 'traditionalists' called to humility,

When a group of longtime Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders released a statement in early June reaffirming the doctrine of salvation as understood by "traditional" Baptists, some wondered if it would change the tenor of the then-upcoming SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

It not only stirred a blogosphere conversation and allowed for some serious hallway discussions, but the statement (visit [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org) to read the full statement) also forced the dialog onto the public platform at the annual meeting.

The topic showed up in a resolution (see story, page 7) and was the focus of SBC President Bryant Wright's president's address (see story, this page)

Executive Committee President and CEO Frank Page also addressed Calvinism during the Executive Committee report.

"Calvinism is an issue amongst us," he said. "You may or may not like that, but it is a real issue. I don't want to shock anyone in this room, but I am not a Calvinist. I am not. I know that shocks you. But I want to tell you this: A lot of our people are."

According to a recent LifeWay Research poll, more than 60 percent of Southern Baptists said they were concerned about Calvinism in the convention, Page noted.

"Friends, I'm concerned because there seems to be some non-Calvinists who are more concerned about rooting out Calvinists than they are about winning the lost for Christ," he said. "Did I tell you I'm not a Calvinist? But I am not among that number."

Some Calvinists, Page said, "seem to think that if we do not believe the same thing about soteriology that they believe then somehow we are less intelligent or ignorant at best."

"I simply say to you today that it's time to realize that a Great Commission Advance needs everyone. A Great Commission Advance needs everyone," he reiterated. "Calvinists and non-Calvinists have worked together for decade upon decade upon decade in this convention."

Page confirmed again that he plans to assemble a group of advisers to help chart a way through the division surrounding Calvinism.

That will not include revising the Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptists' statement of beliefs, he said.

"I do believe we can find some ways to work together better, and I believe that the leaders of both of these groups can come together to say, 'Here's how we can return to working together like once we did,'" Page said.

One way to come together, he said, is for Calvinists and non-Calvinists to go door-to-door in Houston next summer, telling people about the good news of Jesus Christ before the SBC annual meeting.

"If we can come together in missions and evangelism, we can come together," Page said.

David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, touched on the Calvinism debate during his Monday afternoon sermon at the SBC Pastors Conference.

"Let us humbly discuss the things we do not know and boldly declare Truth that we do know. Everyone who repents and believes in the Lord Jesus will be saved," Platt said. "We can all 'Amen' that and everyone who is saved is saved by the grace of God. We are together on this."

### 'God loves the whole world'

"We can debate all day ... but the Scripture is fundamentally clear, God loves the whole world and everyone who trusts in Him will be saved," he said. "We do not have time to waste debating the good news when we have been commissioned to share the good news."

The LifeWay Research survey mentioned by Page presented a slate of statements about Calvinism to a randomly selected sample of senior pastors in the SBC to gauge their theological inclination and whether they are concerned about the impact of Calvinism in the convention.

Seventy-eight percent of pastors responded they personally are not five-point Calvinists, while 16 percent agreed (8 percent somewhat and 8 percent strongly) with the statement "I am a five-point Calvinist." This compares to 32 percent of pastors who agreed with the statement in last year's survey of Protestant pastors.

LifeWay Research asked a similar question in a 2006 SBC survey, which revealed 85 percent did not consider themselves five-point

**"I do believe we can find some ways to work together better, and I believe that the leaders of both of these groups can come together to say, 'Here's how we can return to working together like once we did.'"**

Frank Page, Executive Committee president and CEO

# amongst us'

## common mission over doctrine of salvation

*“We can debate all day ... but the Scripture is fundamentally clear, God loves the whole world and everyone who trusts in Him will be saved. We do not have time to waste debating the good news when we have been commissioned to share the good news.”*

David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham

Calvinists and 10 percent affirmed that they were five-point Calvinists.

“Rather than ask a single question of yes or no, the new survey was intended to capture some of the complexity of the debate by covering several specific theological points and bringing clarity to how strongly pastors hold each position,” Stetzer explained.

Ten percent of respondents strongly agree with the statement “Christ died only for the elect, not for everyone in the world” and another 6 percent somewhat agree. More than 80 percent somewhat disagree (6 percent) or strongly disagree (77 percent) with the statement. This compares to 91 percent of Protestant pastors who disagreed in the earlier survey.

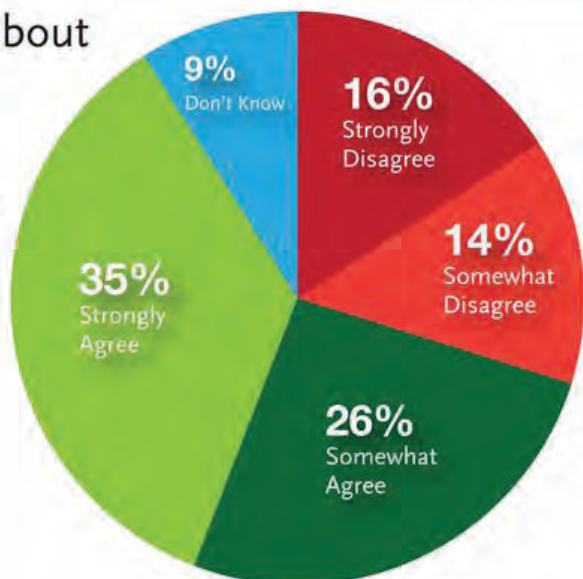
Two-thirds of SBC pastors strongly disagree with a statement on double predestination: “Before the foundation of the world, God pre-

destined some people to salvation and some to damnation.” Eleven percent strongly agree with the statement, while 10 percent somewhat agree and 9 percent somewhat disagree. A similar question was asked of Protestant pastors and 13 percent agreed. Ninety-four percent of respondents believe in the security of the believer, disagreeing with the statement that “a person can, after becoming a Christian, reject Christ and lose their salvation.” Five percent agree a person can lose their salvation.

Stetzer summarized that, “Most Baptists are not Calvinists, though many are, and most Baptists are not Arminians, though many are comfortable with that distinction. However, there is a sizeable minority that see themselves as Calvinist and holds to such doctrines, and a sizeable majority that is concerned about their presence. That points to challenging days to come.” (BP, TAB)

### THEOLOGY Among SBC Pastors

I am concerned about the impact of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention.



LifeWayResearch.com

#### Resolution 1

##### On appreciation

Expressed appreciation to the Baptists of New Orleans for their hospitality and efforts to host the 2012 SBC annual meeting.

#### Resolution 2

##### On 200 years of Baptist ministry in Louisiana

Commended Baptists in Louisiana on their 200th anniversary.

#### Resolution 3

##### On affirmation of a ‘sinner’s prayer’ as a biblical expression of repentance and faith

Reaffirmed that repentance from sin and personal faith in Jesus Christ are necessary for salvation and that crying out for mercy is often identified as a “sinner’s prayer.”

#### Resolution 4

##### On cooperation and the doctrine of salvation

Affirmed that the Baptist Faith and Message provides sufficient understanding of the doctrines of salvation to allow Southern Baptists to partner together in obeying the Great Commission.

#### Resolution 5

##### On protecting religious liberty

Called on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to exempt religious organizations from requirements to provide contraceptives and abortion-causing drugs and devices; asked military leaders to ensure the freedom of chaplains to minister according to the dictates of the chaplain’s conscience; called on the Justice Department to cease efforts to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act.

#### Resolution 6

##### On same-sex ‘marriage’ and civil rights rhetoric

Opposed efforts to frame same-sex “marriage” as a civil right; affirmed right of pastor to preach biblical truth on the issue; urged churches to engage in compassionate ministries to homosexuals.

#### Resolution 7

##### On biblical scholarship and the doctrine of inerrancy

Affirmed belief in the direct creation and historicity of Adam and Eve and a literal, space-time fall of mankind into sin.

#### Resolution 8

##### Affirming human needs ministry and community involvement by local churches

Encouraged ministry to human needs and community involvement as witness of deeds to God’s love; urged “generous support” of human needs ministries.

#### Resolution 9

##### On African-American contributions to American Baptist history

Expressed appreciation for the contributors of African-Americans to the Baptist witness in the United States and named several specific individuals.

To read the full text of the resolutions, visit [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org).

Resolutions

# SBC PASTORS

## Conference

*“Changing: Lives,  
Communities  
and the World”*



**JOSH SMITH**

Josh Smith, pastor of MacArthur Boulevard Baptist Church, Irving, Texas, and son of former SBC president and evangelist Bailey Smith: “God will accomplish His plan, and He will accomplish it through someone. The only question is will it be you?”



**JACK GRAHAM**

Jack Graham, senior pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas: “Just as God was preparing and positioning Moses for the best years of his life and ministry, I believe that God is positioning you for the very best years of your life and ministry.”



**RONNIE FLOYD**

Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of Cross Church in Northwest Arkansas: “Where you are is part of God’s plan. [God’s] providence ... has placed you to live in this time in all of human history and to let you live where you live ... with a purpose.”



**DAVID JEREMIAH**

David Jeremiah, pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, El Cajon, Calif.: “The great temptation of God’s people today is to be discouraged and give up. ... When we consider Him, we realize our challenges pale in comparison to His. He is our inspiration for the journey.”



**DENNIS SWANBERG**

Preacher-comedian Dennis “The Swan” Swanberg: “Jesus needed His best friends, and you do too. I don’t believe we’ll make it in ministry and be the change agents we need to be unless we’re real and we open ourselves up to have best friends.”



**PHIL HOSKINS**

Phil Hoskins, senior pastor of Higher Ground Baptist Church, Kingsport, Tenn.: “(The) greatest need of the hour is for the Holy Spirit to breathe a fresh breath of heaven across our lives, our churches and, ultimately, our nation.”



**TONY EVANS**

Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas: “God didn’t come to take sides, He came to take over. It’s time for the church to wake up and go public. We don’t have time for a white church, or a black church, a Hispanic church. We need the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.”



**HERB REAVIS JR.**

Herb Reavis Jr., senior pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.: “God did not call me to lead in group therapy. God didn’t call me to get people in touch with their inner child. God did not call me to be a motivational speaker. God called me to stand up and preach the Word of God.”



**DON WILTON**

Don Wilton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C.: “It’s not going to take somebody in the White House who will change these United States of America. It’s going to take the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit changing the hearts and lives of our people.”



**JAMES MACDONALD**

James MacDonald, founding pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, Chicago: “Miracles flow for a deeper faith. (The) disciples believed in Him. The result was a great faith foundation ...”



**DAVID PLATT**

David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham: “We must be very clear lest we lead people down a damning path of spiritual deception.”



**FRED LUTER JR.**

Fred Luter Jr., senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans: “The Word of God is the only thing I know that can penetrate years of sin and save a lost soul. How do I know? I wasn’t always a preacher. I was going to hell and enjoying the ride.”



**JOHNNY HUNT**

Johnny Hunt, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga.: “I can remember going weeks and just wondering, will there ever be another hopeful day in my life? ... God really did restore the joy, the strength and the passion.”



**WAYNE ROBERTSON**

Wayne Robertson, pastor of Morningside Baptist Church, Valdosta, Ga.: “There are some uncertain days that you stay in the work because God called you, and you have never forgotten the call God put on your life.”

### Ministers find hope at Pastors Conference

Pastors can find hope, protection, encouragement, truth and strength in Jesus Christ and in the Word of God, Pastors Conference speakers said during the June 17–18 sessions preceding the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in New Orleans.

Speakers addressed the theme, “Changing: Lives, Communities and the World,” during the sessions in the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. To read more from Alabama Baptist pastor David Platt’s sermon, visit [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org).

### New Pastors Conference officers

Officers elected for the SBC Pastors Conference in Houston, June 11–12, 2013, are president, Greg Matte, pastor of FBC Houston (nominated by John Bisagno, retired pastor, FBC Houston); vice president, Paul Jimenez, pastor of Taylors FBC, S.C. (nominated by David Horner, pastor of Providence Baptist, Raleigh, N.C.); and treasurer, John Morgan, senior pastor of Sagemont Baptist, Houston, Texas (nominated by Alabama Baptist Tommy Winders, pastor of Carrollton Baptist).

# 'The Story Lives On'

## WMU annual meeting focuses on Jesus' transforming touch

**T**he Story Lives On" — Woman's Missionary Union's 2012-13 theme — took life through stories of faith from behind prison bars, in lives of at-risk youth and through the work of missionaries and church planters nationally and internationally during the opening session of WMU's June 17-18 meeting in New Orleans.

The theme focused on Jesus and His transforming touch, drawing from Acts 4:20, "As for us we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

In a video filmed behind the prison fences of the McPherson Women's Unit in Newport, Ark., three women shared how they had found hope and a life of purpose despite their circumstances through faith in Jesus Christ.

Introducing herself to the audience, North American Mission Board (NAMB) chaplain Stacey Smith told of her 60-year prison sentence after an early life of drugs and crime. While sitting in a jail cell reading Scripture she asked Jesus to come into her life. Released after 16 years for good behavior, Smith has returned to prison for the past five years to organize Bible studies and reach new believers. She urged others to consider prison ministry. "Prison is a missions field with a captive audience," she said. "They hunger for the Word of God."

Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, told how *The Story Lives On* in the Louisiana State Correctional Institute in Angola. Known for its violence, Angola is the largest maximum security prison in the nation with 5,000 inmates, "many who will spend the rest of their days in prison and never walk out of there."

The seminary began ministering there after the warden, Burl Cain, a Southern Baptist layman, became concerned about the spiritual condition of the men on death row. After starting Experiencing God studies for the men, he called the seminary for help.

Kelley and professors came to the prison with academic courses "to teach them how to be ministers and leaders." The prisoners have enrolled in classes and graduated from the



BP photo

**TELLING THE STORY** — Piercing Word Ministry performs during the evening session of the two-day national Woman's Missionary Union missions celebration and annual meeting at Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans on June 17.

program. Among their class assignments was to lead Bible studies and start churches within their cell blocks.

Laurie Register, executive director of South Carolina WMU, told how the WMU's Project HELP is transforming lives of at-risk and incarcerated youth within the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice system.

For three decades an Acteens ministry flourished on the campus of the Willow Lane Program for Girls located in Columbia, she said. Now that effort has evolved into multiple ministries as local churches and World Changers have led Vacation Bible Schools, constructed and furnished a transitional house and chapel-activity center and prayerwalked throughout the campus.

WMU attendees also heard about the power of Jesus' story from Annette Hall, a Southern Baptist representative who spoke about the

impact of chronological Bible storying. Hall has worked for nearly 40 years with North African and Middle Eastern peoples.

"Two-thirds of the world's people are oral communicators," Hall said. "That means that they learn through stories or music, drama or poetry. ... If you hand them a book to read, they either can't read it or they won't read it."

Also during the meeting, the Dellana O'Brien award, named in honor of the past WMU executive director, was given to Mycie Vue, president of the Minnesota-Wisconsin WMU. Vue is a Hmong immigrant whose family walked for six weeks to escape persecution in Laos.

Re-elected to serve another one-year term were Debby Akerman, national WMU president, and Alabama's Rosalie Hunt, recording secretary. State WMU presidents were elected as vice presidents. (Compiled from BP stories)



BP photo

**LEADERSHIP** — National Acteen Panelist Mary Virginia Harper of First Baptist Church, Prattville, speaks during the national WMU missions celebration and annual meeting June 17.

## Alabama Acteen shares during WMU annual meeting

**N**ational Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) missions celebration and annual meeting attendees were introduced to this year's National Acteen Panelists on June 17.

The National Acteen Panelists are young women chosen from across the United States "based on their commitment to missions and participation and leadership in their Acteens group, church, school and community," according to WMU's website.

Acteens is WMU's missions organization for girls in grades 7 through 12.

Mary Virginia Harper, a member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, shared that she learned boldness in sharing her faith through interactions with a Korean student she met in a high school chemistry class. Harper described him as a devout atheist who would often work "page after page of physics problems that he claimed proved God did not exist."

### Planting seeds

"He was so much smarter than me, but I knew that my God, the God who gave Daniel the courage to face the lion's den, and the God who gave David the strength to overcome Goliath, would give me the words to say to persevere," Harper said. She continued to share with her friend over the past two years, and though he has not yet made a commitment to Christ, Harper said he's begun reading his Bible daily and attending church.

"I know that God will continue to work in his life," Harper said. "Through this experience I have learned that God calls all Christians to be missionaries, even if this simply means being willing to share His love with the people we meet in our everyday lives."

Each of the six Acteen panelists will receive \$1,000 from the Jessica Powell Loftis Scholarship for Acteens from the WMU Foundation. (BP)



BP photo

## Centreville Baptist choir participates in SBC meeting

**T**en members of the choir of Centreville Baptist Church, in Bibb Baptist Association, participated in a combined choir and orchestra consisting of six churches during the opening session June 19 at the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

Mike Vickers, minister of music and senior adults at Centreville Baptist, said it was "an incredible honor (and) a once in a lifetime" opportunity to sing at the annual meeting.

The music was "good and challenging" for the choir, according to Vickers, and included his "favorite" from the event, "Lord Have Mercy." (TAB)

SBC 2012



BP photos

Ramona and Eric Reese, Southern Baptist representatives to Rio de Janeiro, tell about lives that have been changed through funding of the Cooperative Program.



Pastor Jay Wolf of FBC Montgomery shares about his congregation's 'Embrace' experience.

**'No reserves.  
No retreats. ...  
No regrets.'**

**FBC Montgomery part of IMB's 'Embrace' success; 3,400 more churches needed**

**W**hat will it cost to be Jesus' heart, hands and voice to a lost and dying world? Absolutely everything. That was the challenge from International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff June 20 to messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in New Orleans.

"The bigger question is, are you willing to pay the price? Because Jesus said it's going to cost you everything. Everything you are and everything you hope to be," he said.

Elliff reported on the progress of IMB's Embrace challenge, issued at the 2011 SBC in Phoenix, where he called on Southern Baptist churches to claim responsibility for evangelizing all of the world's then 3,800 unreached, unengaged people groups (UUPGs).

"You stepped up to the plate," Elliff told messengers, reporting that 1,281 Southern Baptist churches and entities have indicated an interest in embracing a UUPG. Of that number, 474 churches and entities have also taken steps to go deeper in that commitment.

"It means some of you are taking this really seriously, and you're saying we want to count the cost, we want to see what's involved," Elliff said. "We welcome you to the field, we rejoice that you've taken up this mantle and we praise God that the Kingdom is being expanded because of your involvement."

Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, spoke about the dramatic success his congregation has already witnessed through their Embrace experience. First, Montgomery, is committed to sharing Jesus with the Ejamat people of Senegal, West Africa, a UUPG of about 3,000 with no known believers.

The church sent its first team in mid-March looking for a "person of peace" who would help them gain entry into the Ejamat community. But God gave them more than they bargained for.

"We shared the gospel and 27 people from this animistic group embraced Christ as their Savior," Wolf said. Then during First, Montgomery's, second trip to Senegal in April, Wolf said they witnessed the birth of a new church — a first among the Ejamat.

"It was a dynamic experience, as if we had stepped into the pages of Acts chapter 16," Wolf said. Eight more Ejamat followed Jesus, and by the trip's end, 19 had been baptized.

"To be baptized in that culture is drawing a line in the sand, it's turning your back on many of your family members," Wolf said.

Today there are at least 35 believers among the Ejamat and a pastor — all in less than a year's time. "If an old downtown church like First Baptist, Montgomery, can rise up and embrace an unreached people group ... you can do it too. That's the simple truth," Wolf said.

"If 3,400 of our churches would step up and embrace one of these people groups, what would happen?"

Elliff told the story of William Borden, an American missionary who walked away from his family's fortune to spread the gospel among Muslims in China.

But during language school in Cairo, 25-year-old Borden contracted meningitis and died in 1913 before ever reaching his missions field.

Borden's Bible was found and returned to his parents. Inside the book, he had written the words "No reserve" and "No retreat," referring to his decision to eschew his family's multi-million-dollar fortune. The words "No regrets" were also inscribed in the Bible, dated shortly before his death in Egypt.

"Your life is a blip on the radar screen of eternity. How do you plan to spend the balance of your life?" Elliff asked. "1.7 billion [of the world's people] could very likely die without ever having heard the name of the Lord Jesus

Christ. What's it going to cost? It's going to cost everything. No reserves. No retreats. ... No regrets." (BP)



ELLIFF



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## The Meaning of the Fourth in Three Words

The following was originally published as a blog article at [www.RickLance.com](http://www.RickLance.com) on June 28, 2008:

A silly story is told about a little boy asking his father a question, "Dad, do they have the Fourth of July in England?" "Yes, oh yes, son they do have a fourth of July in England. They just don't celebrate it." In a way, that apocryphal teasing exchange between a father and his son summarizes the uniqueness of the Fourth of July for Americans. It is a uniquely American holiday.

The fourth of July in all other countries is a date on a calendar, just like any other. There is no reason at all for the British or French or Chinese or Russians or Brazilians to celebrate the Fourth of July. But in America there are many reasons. I can think

of at least three of them.

The Fourth of July reminds us of our **history**, or at least it should. It is the day set aside as the punctual moment in history when the United States of America declared

its independence from the British crown. It was not the beginning of the story or the actual end of the relationship, but it is a point in time when Americans can celebrate their birth as a nation.

Every year in Charlottesville, Va., the largest number of people on a single day take the oath of allegiance as American citizens on the Fourth of July. This must be a sight to

behold, and it would have made the founders proud. They would nod and say, "Now that is America."

Our history is not a perfect

story. There was a Civil War fought between the states over differing perspectives concerning what freedom means. Lincoln would call the nation back to the Declaration of Independence to remind Americans that all people are created equal by God.

By Rick Lance  
State Missionary  
Executive Director



In the twentieth century, following two world wars, America would examine itself the hard way and come to the conclusion that liberty and justice are for all people. There would be ugly scenes where some radicals would not accept this view as a vision of what the nation should become. Now that sentiment lingers in the minds and hearts of a fading number of citizens who cannot understand the true meaning of freedom.

The Fourth of July has come to mean more than a day to celebrate a historical event. It is more than just about history; it is a focus on

**liberty.** The American narrative, although not a perfect one, is really about liberty and freedom. With all of our outcries of dissent today and with the personalities literally

shouting at each other on talk shows, we sometimes forget that we live in a country where this kind of expression can be offered.

One night recently, I was remoting through

the channels on my television and parked a few minutes to listen to the debate between two rather animated guests on a talk show. I found myself amused by the sparring between them. As the program was coming to a close for this particular segment, the host thanked the guests and they both smiled at each other and shook hands as if they had just played a round of golf together.

This is just one illustration of something people outside our

*continued on page 14*

continued from page 13

nation sometimes cannot understand. In America, dissent is almost a sport. Most of the time, not all times for sure, it is good natured and a reflection of the citizens in a high-tech dialogue. The Fourth of July underscores that freedom. It is precious indeed!

For Christians, true freedom is found in Christ Himself. "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32, HCSB) That is a higher and holier concept of freedom we should celebrate every day of our lives. But on the Fourth of July, we can pause and thank God for liberty that comes from the laws of the land, no matter how imperfect they may be.

Yes, the Fourth of July is about history, our history. It is also about liberty, our liberty, but it also is about responsibility. Reportedly, following the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the irascible old Ben Franklin said, "We have given you a republic, if you can keep it." Our history and our liberty carry a heavy sense of **responsibility**. That is what ol' Ben was saying in that often quoted remark concerning the revolutionary movement in America.

Every generation has a price to pay for the liberty we enjoy. Sadly, for some it was the ultimate sacrifice of the giving of one's life, such as in World War II, in the Pacific or in Europe. For most Americans, the price is exercising responsible citizenship such as voting. I still have trouble understanding why some people never bother to register and vote. It is almost un-American.

History, liberty and responsibility are the three words which come to my mind as we celebrate the Fourth of July. Americans aren't better than any other people in the world but for providential reasons, we have been blessed with a history that tells our story, a story of liberty and responsibility. Perhaps Viktor Frankl was right when he said, "Americans need a Statue of Responsibility on the west coast to balance the Statue of Liberty on the east coast." That was one European who may have understood us better than we understand ourselves.



Numbers 14:24



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ONLINE INFO: [www.alabamawmu.org](http://www.alabamawmu.org)

For more information, please contact Alabama WMU, 1.800.264.1225.

This event is funded in part by gifts of Alabama Baptists given through the Kathleen Mallory Mission Offering and the Cooperative Program.



The State Board of Missions joins with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in encouraging churches to give 1% more through the Cooperative Program.

If each Alabama Baptist church increases Cooperative Program gifts by 1/4% of undesignated receipts per year, we will meet the 1% Challenge in only four years. This is also a good way for a church to begin giving through the Cooperative Program.

**Together we can do more to impact the Kingdom.**

For information and resources about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, [jswedenburg@alsbom.org](mailto:jswedenburg@alsbom.org).

## REACHING THE MANY FACES OF ALABAMA



**2012** THE SUMMIT:  
FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Shocco Springs  
Friday and Saturday

AUGUST 3-4, 2012  
ONE WEEKEND ONLY

You've seen the promotions for several months now. Have you made your reservation? Now is the time to contact Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105 to reserve your room at Shocco for this training event for church leaders.

Then go online to [www.alsbom.org/summit](http://www.alsbom.org/summit) to look at the program to plan which sessions you want to attend. If you are an adult Sunday School teacher, you may want to go to "Becoming a F.A.T. (faithful, available and teachable) Teacher" or one of the other 28 conferences geared specifically to adult Sunday School teachers.

What if you teach children? Then you may want to attend "Tools for Teaching Bible Skills to Children." Want to know how to reach out to single adults in your community? Then don't miss "Ideas for Reaching Single Adults."

Training will be offered for many church leaders including Sunday School, discipleship, church music, stewardship, men's ministry, Royal Ambassadors, evangelism, computer services, deacons, special needs and more.

It is not possible to list all the sessions here, but you can find them online at [www.alsbom.org/summit](http://www.alsbom.org/summit).

For more information, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240, [jbaldwin@alsbom.org](mailto:jbaldwin@alsbom.org).

# LEADERLAB



**Tuesday-Thursday, July 17-19**  
**Baptist Building, 2001 E. South**  
**Blvd., Montgomery**

Premier leadership training offered to pastors, staff members and lay leaders of Alabama Baptist churches. Register online now at [www.alsbom.org/leaderlab](http://www.alsbom.org/leaderlab).

#### GUEST SPEAKERS:

- **Tuesday: Doug Munton, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, O'Fallon, Ill., "Seven Steps to Becoming a Healthy Christian Leader."** "Seven Steps" is not a stodgy treatise on leadership but a system that takes practical steps toward becoming a healthy leader. A dead-on diagnosis is delivered, then a practical and biblical prescription for what ails our leadership is given with a probing and engaging style.
- **Thursday: John Shepherd, lead pastor, River Oaks Community Church, Murfreesboro, Tenn., "Church Unique."** "Church Unique" is a visioning process to help churches develop a stunningly unique model of ministry that leads to a redemptive movement. It guides churches away from an internal focus to emphasize participation in their community and surrounding culture.

#### DAY RATES (includes lunch, breaks and curriculum on day(s) attending):

One Day: \$45  
Any Two Days: \$75

#### FULL LAB (includes meals, breaks, lodging and curriculum):

Double Occupancy: \$149  
Single Occupancy/Couples: \$249

For more information about registration or cost, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, [jallen@alsbom.org](mailto:jallen@alsbom.org). [www.alsbom.org/leaderlab](http://www.alsbom.org/leaderlab)

**FOCUS on One Mission**



**The Bully Issue:  
A Prevention Approach**



The Office of Collegiate and Student Ministries presents a "Drive-In" Youth Ministry Training Event **Thursday, September 27, 2012**, at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. For more details: [www.thestudenthub.org](http://www.thestudenthub.org).

*Bullying is an ever increasing issue for youth today. Some studies indicate that as many as 70% of all students have been bullied. Join us for training in a ministry-based response to a critical issue.*

**Allen Jackson**  
Camp Pastor

**Brett Rutledge**  
Worship Leader

**Youth Leadership Camp**  
**super summer alabama**  
**july 9-13, 2012**  
[www.supersummeralabama.com](http://www.supersummeralabama.com)

**WHO SHOULD COME...**  
Any student in the state of Alabama who has completed the 8th-12th grade and exemplifies solid spiritual leadership in his or her church. Each student must adhere to a high standard of Christian maturity and meet certain requirements in order to participate.

**\$225 per student**  
@  
**Samford University**

 **Alabama Baptist Convention**  
**State Board of Missions**  
Office of Collegiate & Student Ministries

# WHO KNEW? *The First Three Weeks of College...*

**Transitions**  
*Helping high school students take the next step in their faith journey.*



What a student does during their first three weeks of college sets the pattern for his whole college career in the relationships he establishes and the patterns he develops.

Help lay the groundwork for Christlike college experiences by connecting yourself or your students with collegiate ministers by visiting [www.sbccampusconnect.net](http://www.sbccampusconnect.net).

Once you go to the web page, enter contact information for yourself or your student. It takes less than three minutes and it will be networked to the campus of your choice!

**Collegiate and Student Ministries** • 1.800.264.1225, ext. 275 • (334) 613.2275

# YOUTH EVANGELISM CONFERENCE 2012 JULY 27-28



**REGISTER NOW** at  
[www.thestudenthub.org/YEC](http://www.thestudenthub.org/YEC)

**\$20 PER PERSON**  
VAUGHN FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH  
MONTGOMERY, AL

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT US AT  
1-800-264-1225 EXT. 275  
OR VISIT [WWW.THESTUDENTHUB.ORG/YEC](http://WWW.THESTUDENTHUB.ORG/YEC)

**JULY 27-28, 2012**



DAVE RHODES



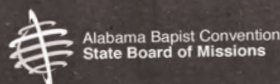
CHRIS BROOKS



BEAN & BAILEY



RUSH OF FOOLS



This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

# SUMMER CAMPS FROM WORSHIP LEADERSHIP & CHURCH MUSIC

## Mix456 • July 9-13, Shocco

A week-long worship arts camp using all of the senses and arts to discover music and our Creator. For 4th-6th graders

### Classroom

**Settings:** music learning in a fun way, new friends, games, crafts. Each class performs on Thursday.

**Recreation:** Bazooka Ball, swimming, field games, mini golf, aqua jump

**Worship:** band, skits, age-appropriate speaker

**Free Time:** devotions (student-led), snack bar, games, food

**Cost:** \$265 per person

### Registration:

- (1) 1-800-280-1105
- (2) Go online to [www.alsbom.org/mixREMIX](http://www.alsbom.org/mixREMIX) and click on "Mix456 T-Shirt Order Form."
- (3) Complete and fax form to Cindy Parrish at (334) 288-2693.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, [cparrish@alsbom.org](mailto:cparrish@alsbom.org).

## ReMix • July 9-13, Shocco

A week-long worship arts camp using all of the senses and arts to discover music and our Creator. For 7th-10th graders

**Teams:** music, new friends, team competitions. ReMix performance Friday morning

**Recreation:** paintball, night swimming, zany team competitions, mini golf, aqua jump

**Worship:** praise band, skits, age-appropriate speaker

**Free Time:** devotions (student-led), snack bar, games, food

**Cost:** \$265 per person

### Registration:

- (1) 1-800-280-1105
- (2) Go online to [www.alsbom.org/mixREMIX](http://www.alsbom.org/mixREMIX), and click on "ReMix T-Shirt Order Form."
- (3) Complete and fax form to Cindy Parrish at (334) 288-2693.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, [cparrish@alsbom.org](mailto:cparrish@alsbom.org).



# State LIBRARY WORKSHOP

September 17-19  
Shocco Springs

### Online Info:

[www.alsbom.org/churchlibrary](http://www.alsbom.org/churchlibrary)

### Reservations/Cost:

1-800-280-1105

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, [jallen@alsbom.org](mailto:jallen@alsbom.org).

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY,  
AUGUST 10-11, 2012  
LAGOON PARK & FAIN PARK,  
MONTGOMERY

## Baptist Men's State Softball Tournament

• 40 TEAM MAXIMUM • ROUND ROBIN  
TOURNAMENT • ASA-SANCTIONED •  
SINGLE ELIMINATION IN CHAMPIONSHIP  
ROUND OF 16 TEAMS. EACH TEAM WILL  
PLAY AT LEAST FOUR GAMES.

**ENTRY FEE: \$135**

FOR ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO  
PARTICIPATE AND AN INFORMATION  
PACKET, PLEASE CONTACT MINISTRY  
ASSISTANT MONDENE COKER AT  
1-800-264-1225, EXT. 273,  
[MCOKER@ALSBOM.ORG](mailto:MCOKER@ALSBOM.ORG).

# REGIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL & DISCIPLESHIP LEADER TRAINING IN 2012

Sunday School & Discipleship training is coming to your region. Choose the location and date that is best for you. Go to the web pages below where you'll find a registration form, instructions about how to register and other information. Registration is \$5 per person before the early registration deadline listed on the form, \$10 per person after the deadline.

## MidWest, Northport Baptist Church, Northport: August 11, 2012

Contact: State Missionary Jamie Baldwin,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240,  
jbalwin@alsbom.org  
www.alsbom.org/midwest

## SouthEast, Cloverdale Baptist Church, Dothan: August 11, 2012

Contact: State Missionary James Blakeney,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 286, or (334) 613-2286,  
jblakeney@alsbom.org  
www.alsbom.org/southeast

## North, Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens: August 18, 2012

Contact: State Missionary Daniel Edmonds,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, or (334) 613-2285,  
dedmonds@alsbom.org  
www.alsbom.org/north

## South, Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile: August 18, 2012

Contact: State Missionary James Blakeney,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 286, or (334) 613-2286,  
jblakeney@alsbom.org  
www.alsbom.org/south

## Metro, Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham: August 25, 2012

Contact: State Missionary Eileen Mitchell,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221,  
emitchell@alsbom.org  
www.alsbom.org/metro

## NorthCentral, First Baptist Church, Cullman: August 25, 2012

Contact: State Missionary Sonya Tucker,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 271, or (334) 613-2271,  
stucker@alsbom.org  
www.alsbom.org/northcentral

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

# PASTOR, DEACON/ SPOUSE RETREAT

SEPTEMBER 28-29, 2012  
Shocco Springs

Shocco Springs, Friday and Saturday, September 28-29, 2012

Begins at 4 p.m. Friday, concludes at 2 p.m. Saturday.

Guest Speakers: Tom and Kim Blackaby

Reservations/Cost: 1-800-280-1105

Online Info: [www.alsbom.org/pastordeaconspouseretreat](http://www.alsbom.org/pastordeaconspouseretreat)

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218, [ddickey@alsbom.org](mailto:ddickey@alsbom.org)

**FREE**



This 16-month calendar (Sept. 2012–Dec. 2013) has State Board of Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty of room for you to add your church's events.

Limit **20 COPIES** per church. To order, please **call, fax** or **e-mail** your request to Charleen Hobbs at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 231; 334.288.2693 (fax); [chobbs@alsbom.org](mailto:chobbs@alsbom.org); or **order online** at [www.alsbom.org/cpg](http://www.alsbom.org/cpg).

Be sure to **include** your name, church name, mailing address and number of church planning guides needed (up to 20).

order your 2012-2013

churchplanningguide



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

# WORSHIP & LEADERSHIP MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES



## Children's Choir Summit July 6-7, 2012 at Shocco Springs

A training conference for children's choir directors, workers, secretaries, coordinators, music ministers or wannabes. It is interactive learning with many perks to get your choirs ready for the new year.

NEW THIS YEAR: Great for daycares and Mothers' Day Out programs. Writer for music curriculum, from nursery care to five-year olds, will be with us. Wonderful information on how to start a daycare program or enhance your extended care ministry.

COST: \$98 per person (based on three or more to a room)

ONLINE INFO: [www.alsbom.org/children-summit](http://www.alsbom.org/children-summit)

### Upcoming Events for Fall:

- Alabama Singing Men and Alabama Singing Women Retreats: September
- Senior Adult Choir Celebrations: October
- Keyboard Festivals: November

Go online to [www.alsbom.org/worship](http://www.alsbom.org/worship) for more information.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

## OUTSTANDING 2012 MISSION VOLUNTEER

The Office of Global Missions of the State Board of Missions would like to honor an Outstanding 2012 Mission Volunteer. Your help is needed.

Please think about lay people who are worthy of such recognition, and let us hear from you. We realize that there are many who could fit this requirement; however, for this purpose only one individual (or couple) will be selected.

Your recommendation will make a difference. The following information is required if a person (or couple) is to be considered:

1. The name, address, and phone number of the person (or couple) being nominated.
2. The name of the pastor, church and association with address and phone number to which he/she/they belong.
3. A list of volunteer mission service: their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Uttermost that he/she/they

have participated during the past five years, including locations and dates. If the nominee(s) has not served in at least three of the Acts 1:8 areas, please do not nominate that person.

4. Statements supporting your nomination as Outstanding 2012 Mission Volunteer. (Why you feel he/she/they should be recognized in this manner.)

5. Your signature with address, phone, church, and association.

To access the Information Sheet and Nomination Application, go online to [www.alsbom.org/missionsvolunteer](http://www.alsbom.org/missionsvolunteer).

If you do not have web access, request an Information Sheet and Nomination Application by calling Ministry Assistant Virginia Gardner at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238, or (334) 613-2238, [vgardner@alsbom.org](mailto:vgardner@alsbom.org).

*Note: No phone calls or email recommendations and/or endorsements accepted. Nominations must be received, not postmarked, no later than September 21, 2012.*



SBC 2012



BP photo

Southern Baptist messengers to the 2012 SBC annual meeting in New Orleans gather around and pray for NAMB church planters, missionaries and chaplains.

# ‘Planting churches ... to reach people’

## NAMB presentation highlights bivocational pastors, chaplains

**L**ast year at the 2011 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Phoenix, Matt Mowrey took the stage as a testimony to God’s work in Norwich, Conn., through North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary Shaun Pillay.

This year Southern Baptists saw a video of Mowrey’s dad who, shortly after watching last year’s presentation, became one of Norwich’s newest believers. Recently, Mowrey’s grandmother also accepted Christ.

During this year’s NAMB report and presentation, NAMB President Kevin Ezell highlighted the importance of ongoing and sustainable efforts, like those in Norwich, in penetrating lostness in North America. “We’re not planting churches that will make a difference for a week or a month or a year,” Ezell told messengers. “We’re planting churches that will continue to reach people year after year after year.”

To highlight the need for more churches in North America, Ezell offered a historical glimpse into the SBC’s nearly two centuries. “When we started back in 1845, we started

churches at a great pace. By 1900 there was one church for every 3,800 people,” Ezell said. “Today there are two different North Americas — one very well churching and one that’s not.”

Some Southern states have one SBC congregation for every 1,400 people, but in Canada there is one church for every 117,000 people, he said. With a goal of seeing a net gain of 5,000 additional SBC congregations by 2022 and with losing an average of 890 churches annually, at least 13,500 new churches will be needed in the next 10 years.

Another focus is bivocational pastors. Ezell said they are the Iron Men of the SBC. NAMB will provide educational and resourcing opportunities for them and encourage would-be pastors to pursue a profession as they pursue ministry.

In the most moving and dramatic portion of the presentation, SBC messengers viewed the story of Army Chaplain (Capt.) Jared Vineyard. Prior to becoming a chaplain, Vineyard’s unit was attacked by a suicide bomber while on a tour of duty in Iraq in 2004. Eight members of his unit were killed. The rest — including Vineyard — were injured. The experience ultimately led Vineyard toward chaplaincy service. At the close of the video, Doug Carver, a retired two-star Army major general and executive director of NAMB’s chaplaincy team, introduced Vineyard and his wife, Amanda, to SBC messengers who welcomed him with a sustained standing ovation. (NAMB)



BP photo

Chaplain (Capt.) Jared Vineyard with his wife, Amanda, challenges Southern Baptists to pray for chaplains serving in the U.S. military for their focus and for their families during the 2012 SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

— Paid Advertising —

## Attention Senior Citizens

*On May 22, 2012, Gov. Robert Bentley signed into law the ELDER ABUSE ACT. Protecting the senior citizens of the state of Alabama.*

In my years of doing business with seniors across the state, I have seen and heard of abuse of good people being taken advantage of too much from other companies in the walk-in tub business. Anytime a company will not share the cost of their tubs over the phone, be aware that they are high pressure in their selling tactics. The biggest problem dealing with these companies is that they OVERCHARGE THE CUSTOMER FOR THE TUBS. I get calls weekly from seniors across Alabama that are concerned that they have paid way too much for their tub. I ask them what was the price they paid and it can range from \$14,000 to \$17,000. THIS IS HIGHWAY ROBBERY to say it

nice. People are paying this because of high pressure sales. DON’T DO IT. We at Dream Baths are in the business of taking care of our seniors and helping them and not just making a sale. CALL US BEFORE YOU BUY! Remember we can SAVE you THOUSANDS and you will be a very satisfied customer after dealing with us. I GUARANTEE it.

— CHARLIE THORNTON, owner



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BP photo

## Alabama’s Dean Forrest speaks at COSBE service

Dean Forrest, of Forrest Ministries in Pike Road, and president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists (COSBE), speaks during the COSBE worship service June 17 at the New Orleans Hilton Riverside in New Orleans with the theme ‘The Gospel: The Power of God Unto Salvation.’

# Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

## 50 Years Ago June 1962

Alabamian Department Heads: Two Alabamians have been named department heads on the 1962 summer staff at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly, announced manager Willard K. Weeks. Tyson Thompson, of Montgomery, will supervise the auditorium, and Patsy Peeples, of Birmingham, is press secretary. The 475 staffers represent 171 high schools and colleges, 23 states and five foreign countries.

## 40 Years Ago June 1972

Historic Church Plans Anniversary: Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, will celebrate its 150th anniversary June 11-18. Organized in 1822, the church has been influential in the life of Alabama Baptists. Its leadership started Judson College and Samford University. *The Alabama Baptist* was published in Marion during the years 1840-1852 and 1874-1877. In 1875 the

newly established State Mission Board was located at Siloam. Sesquicentennial speakers include Hudson Baggett, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*; George Bagley, executive secretary of the Alabama Baptist State Convention; Arthur Rutledge, executive secretary of the SBC Home Mission Board; Leslie Wright, Samford president; and N.H. McCrummen, Judson president.

## 30 Years Ago June 1982

Mobile College News: Hazel Petersen has been named vice president for academic affairs and dean of Mobile College. William K. Weaver Jr., president of the college, made the announcement following Petersen's election by the executive committee of the college's board of trustees. Petersen has served as interim dean since last August when E.M. Keebler, then dean, became senior vice president.

## 20 Years Ago June 1992

RA Awards Announced: Jimmy S. Holland Sr., of Sheffield, and Bryce Stokes, of Auburn, are two of 16 persons who will accept the Award of Merit presented by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission's International Legion of Royal Ambassadors during the National Brotherhood breakfast in Indianapolis June 10. The late H. Mac Johnson, of Montgomery, also will be remembered for his work as an RA leader. Johnson's family will accept his Award of Merit posthumously. He was state Brotherhood director for 20 years.

## 10 Years Ago June 2002

NOBTS Honors Alumnus: Alabamian Chette LaRue Williams Sr. was honored as one of two distinguished alumni from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) during its alumni luncheon at the Southern Baptist Convention. Williams, who earned a master of divinity degree from NOBTS in 1993, currently serves as full-time campus director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Auburn University. Williams formerly served as pastor of New Covenant Baptist Church, New Orleans.



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## MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF *THE ALABAMA BAPTIST*, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR EMAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

### CHURCH POSITIONS

**PASTOR-WIFE TEAM:** Mulberry Baptist Church being a small rural, traditional Southern Baptist church, established 1818, and located 12 miles west of Clanton, Ala., in beautiful Chilton County, is seeking a full-time pastor-wife team, age 35-55, married with children, college graduate with Baptist seminary courses desirable, 5-plus years of experience in preaching, pastoral care and administration with a vision for growth. Salary and benefit package includes spacious church pastorage. Submit resumes and CDs: Chairman Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 7, Maplesville, AL 36750.

**BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC WORSHIP LEADER:** Bell Lane Baptist seeking bivocational music worship leader dedicated to lead adult choir and worship in blended service of traditional hymns and praise and worship music. Send resume to: pastoratbelllane@bellsouth.net or Bell Lane Baptist Church, 1000 Bell Lane Road, Clanton, AL 35045.

**PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR:** Philadelphia Baptist seeking part-time music director to lead worship and choir. 3-5 years experience. Send resume: Music Director Search, 1200 Burrows Crossing Road, Jasper, AL 35504.

**PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER:** Round Island Baptist, Athens, Ala., is seeking a part-time music minister. Submit resumes to: JeanAngel@charter.net, or mail: 16407 Miller Street, Athens, AL 35611. Job description available upon request.

**MINISTER OF YOUTH & EDUCATION:** Farley Community Church (a Southern Baptist church) in Huntsville, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of youth

and education. Resumes may be sent to: Farley Community Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 12302 Bell Road, Huntsville, AL 35803.

**MINISTER TO STUDENTS:** Hillcrest Baptist Church seeking resumes for a minister to students. Please send your resume to: 500 Alberta Street, Enterprise, AL 36330, by July 31, ATTN: Student Search Team, or email to: pastorsec@hbce.org.

**MINISTER OF YOUTH:** West Side Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Ala., is searching for a minister of youth (part-time). If interested please mail a resume to: P.O. Box 457, Jacksonville AL 36265 or email it to: mined@juno.com.

**PART-TIME MINISTER TO YOUTH:** Holt Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, is seeking a part-time minister of youth. Please email resumes to: rmitchell@holtbaptistchurch.org, or send via postal mail to: Holt Baptist Church, 3101 Alabama Avenue NE, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404.

**PART-TIME, BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF STUDENTS:** Pates Chapel Baptist Church in Jemison, Ala., is searching for a part-time, bivocational minister of students. Please email resume to: hammitup@centurytel.net, or mail resume to the church at: 190 County Road 295, Jemison, AL 35085, to the attention of Youth Search Committee.

**OTHER POSITIONS**  
**INDEPENDENT SALES ASSOCIATE CONTRACTOR:** The 170-year-old *Alabama Baptist* is an award-winning statewide weekly newspaper with more than 200,000 readers. Baptists comprise the largest Christian denomination

in Alabama with membership of more than a million. *The Alabama Baptist* is seeking contract sales people with the ability to develop advertising partnerships with businesses and organizations interested in reaching the key demographics of our readers and growing their business. As an independent sales associate contractor, you would work from your home office with no territory restrictions. *The Alabama Baptist, Inc.* provides a unique working environment. We are partners with the churches of the Alabama Baptist State Convention working together for the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Each employee is expected to manage his/her personal and professional life in accordance with this relationship and consistent with the traditions of *The Alabama Baptist*. Send resumes and inquiries to: bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

**DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS:** Suwannee Baptist Association, an association of 39 churches in Suwannee and Hamilton counties in Florida, seeks a director of missions. A job description is available on the website: suwanneebaptassoc.net. A description is available upon request from smbsearch@gmx.com and is where resumes should also be directed.

**BUSINESS**  
**CHRISTIAN VALUES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY:** Christian Values Green Technology Company seeks mature business professionals for high-income opportunity. Home-based office. Hands-on support and apprenticeship-style training. For complete information, call Paul at 888-710-6994.

**CHURCH SIGNS:** Reliable Signs offers

design, fabrication, installation and service. All types of signs from electronic messaging to traditional. Statewide coverage. Christian-owned. Many church references available. www.reliablesigns.com. 800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

**FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIRLIFTS:** Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

**BAILEY BROTHERS MUSIC COMPANY:** Serving Alabama for 25 years. Audio, video and lighting integration systems installed, serviced and repaired. Insured and bonded contractor. We provide solutions for small or large houses of worship. Call Montgomery at 334-262-7827 or Birmingham 205-271-7827.

**CHURCH CONSTRUCTION**  
**CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS:** Let Webb Builders help your church expand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

**TRAVEL/VACATION**  
**GEORGIA MOUNTAIN CABIN:** 2 BRs, 2 BAs, furnished cabin. Wheelchair accessible. \$125/night with 3-night minimum. 6 nights at \$125/night with 1 night free. Located in mountains of Blue Ridge, Ga. Call 941-755-3655.

**LOG CABIN:** Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

## Want to know God?

Pastor Breck Ladd  
Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham

At our house we have three wonderful children who share our home with Shiloh, our puppy, who is 75 percent beagle and 25 percent goat. Let's just say he eats anything he can get his snout around when we are not looking. He has tried and tested us on every front.

There is one reason Shiloh has remained a fixture in our home. Her name is Julia, our beautiful 4-year-old daughter. Shiloh loves Julia and Julia loves Shiloh. They are best buds.

I will often ask Julia how much she loves her mommy and daddy. Her answers often amuse me. She will often say something like, "More than peanut butter" or "To the moon 150 million times." However, this week her response astounded me. As usual, I asked her how much she loved her mother and me. In her most grown-up 4-year-old voice, she said, "More than Shiloh." I chuckled and thought, "I know that is a bunch." As I smiled I said, "Well, that must mean you love Mommy and me the most." She retorted with a grin, "Silly Daddy. I love God the most and He loves me the most."

It really is that simple. It is so simple that a child can understand the love of the Creator. Paul reminded the people in Rome, "But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God's love for us is amazing, overwhelming, incredible, indescribable and infinite. However, may we never forget that it is simply true.

Today God's love for you is true and available. The love of God is simple and meant to be simply applied to our lives. We often want to make it more complicated than it really is. Let me illustrate in two questions. Is there anything my daughter could do to make me love her more? On the same note, is there anything my daughter could do to make me love her less? The answer to both is obviously no.

You can be a child of the King. All you must do is accept by faith the free gift of grace through Jesus Christ. Friend, God is calling you. He loves you so much that He sent His Son Jesus to give His life for you. Won't you come home to Him? ☪

# Soaring Eagle Ministry takes gospel to K'ekchi in Guatemala

By Maggie Walsh  
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

When retired Southern Baptist representative Ted Lindwall first presented the gospel to the K'ekchi people group in 1964, he had no way of knowing what that seed would sprout.

Since Lindwall's initial planting, more people have traveled to Guatemala to cultivate this crop, including a team of missionaries that have come together under the wingspan of Soaring Eagle Ministry.

Conceived in David McGowin's mind in 2004, Soaring Eagle Ministry has been traveling to Guatemala twice a year for the last eight years to minister to the K'ekchi people group. Each trip lasts about 17 days.

McGowin, who is pastor of New Freedom Baptist Church, Cullman, in West Cullman Baptist Association said "the wondrous thing" is that the K'ekchi have formed 360 churches since the gospel was first introduced to them 48 years ago.

Soaring Eagle Ministry is a "faith ministry," McGowin said, dedicated to teaching, training and growing K'ekchi pastors so that they can better lead their congregations and reach out to those in need.

## Equipping pastors

"Our goal is to be supportive of, walk along with and equip pastors and churches to better know and understand the Bible," he said.

The Soaring Eagle team consists of Jane and Wendall Parker, retired International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries; Fran Eachus, longtime K'ekchi translator and Guatemalan mis-



Photo courtesy of David McGowin

**FELLOWSHIP** — Jane and Wendell Parker (retired missionaries to Guatemala) meet Pastor Charles Choe (right) of a four-month-old new mission outside Coban, Guatemala.

sionary; Jim McGriff, retired IMB missionary; and McGowin.

Although it is not a part of the IMB, McGriff describes Soaring Eagle as working "in harmony with the strategy of the IMB to accomplish the goals they have set."

The K'ekchi people's numerous churches have been organized under three associations that are members of what is translated as "The Guatemala Baptist Convention of Churches."

On each trip to Guatemala the Soaring Eagle team travels from Cobán to Las Casas to Sayaxché, leading conferences that provide "more advanced training of pastors," McGriff said.

McGowin said he enjoys teaching the pastors because of their enthusiasm and hunger for understanding the Bible. "They're like a

dry sponge in a wet dish — they just soak it up," he said.

Soaring Eagle has been able to provide "round-trip" travel scholarships for each pastor who attends one of the three conferences through the assistance of several Southern Baptist churches. The

## 'Lives changed' at Rockford Baptist's youth camp

By Maggie Walsh  
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

After eight months of prayer and preparation, Rockford Baptist Church's Youth Camp 2012 at Camp Toknowhim in Pisgah was a blessed experience where "lives were changed," said Jeff Fuller, pastor of the Central Baptist Association church.

"Dare 2 Disciple" was the theme

churches' support also allowed the team to provide each pastor with a 39-page commentary on the 2012 conference theme "Death and Dying," written by McGowin and translated by Eachus.

Wendall and Jane Parker, who both speak K'ekchi, joined the Soaring Eagle team to assist in the legwork and logistics of the operation.

The Parkers, who are 84 and 82 years old, have already traveled to Guatemala twice this year.

## Radical change

Jane Parker detailed the radical change that the village of Sayaxché has undergone since the gospel was introduced to the area.

"I can remember when there wasn't a church," she said. "We would go to the town on Sunday and have to walk over people drunk from the night before."

Now the village has a church with more than 100 families attending, led by a pastor trained by Soaring Eagle Ministry.

The impact that Soaring Eagle has had on the K'ekchi people "is

not measurable," McGriff said. It is a multiplication process that begins with training a pastor and flows into congregations and communities.

One such example of the outflow from this ministry is the formation of a Guatemalan women's group whose name is translated as "women's missionary union."

The women's group in the Petén region of Guatemala raised 96,000 quetzal (approximately \$12,500) to support their full-time K'ekchi missionaries and aid the construction of a meetinghouse in Sayaxché.

Jane Parker described Soaring Eagle as a "prayer ministry and economic ministry," requiring the aid of fellow Christians to join the team in praying for the K'ekchi people. There are currently 56 people across Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Kentucky involved in the prayer ministry for the team.

Soaring Eagle Ministry also has a variety of ministries available for local needs. For more information, including how to get involved in the prayer ministry, call McGowin at 256-775-6878 or email sem4031@juno.com.

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for this year's third annual camp, which was June 11-15.

At the camp the young people participated in Bible studies and quiet times written by Fuller and fellowshiped to strengthen their relationships with one another. Lebron Spradley led the daily worship services.

Tina Fuller, Rockford Baptist's youth director and Jeff Fuller's wife, took away all electronic devices at the beginning of the week. The absence of phones and music players gave students the "freedom to relate in a spiritual way with God," Jeff Fuller said.

Each year the Rockford youth

raise money for the camp through car washes, bake sales, a pancake breakfast, a pinto bean supper and a dinner theater.

"We believe that by earning their own way to camp, it teaches them a valuable work ethic and gives them ownership," Fuller said. "We hope to teach them that, 'He who doesn't work, doesn't eat.'"

The final night was a special time for the group, Fuller said. As they rode on a trailer to an overlook for the final service of the week, Fuller challenged them to come alongside one another and "carry the burdens" of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

During the drive the students encountered three eight-foot crosses on the side of the road. Every member of the group had to work together to carry the crosses to the overlook, where they were reminded of the challenge that following Christ can be.

Of the 30 people who attended "Dare 2 Disciple," four students accepted Christ into their hearts and two rededicated their lives.

"As I watched the week unfold, my thought was, 'I wish the entire church could be here and be renewed,'" chaperone Joel Glover said.

Rockford plans to continue hosting Youth Camp in upcoming years.

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 1

## Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson Dean and Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

### DECISION DARE Joshua 24:14-25

Joshua lived a long and full life. He served as a commander in Israel's army, a long-standing understudy to Moses and administrator over the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land. He knew men who had been entrusted with responsibility and had seen many of them collapse under its pressure. Joshua had also seen men like Caleb, who determined to follow God's lead wherever He directed. As he anticipated his own end, Joshua assembled the elders of Israel together to challenge them. They must decide to remain faithful. They must choose to follow Yahweh.

### Take a Stand (14-15)

Polytheism was commonplace in the ancient world. Rejection of the one true God led to replacement with gods that looked like the created world and acted like humanity. The Egyptians were inventive in their cultic practices, creating gods with a combination of animal and human components and attributing divine status to the Pharaoh. Israel had already become enamored with fertility gods in Moab (Num. 25:1-3) on the eastern side of the Jordan River. The army had also conquered a number of Amorite towns in Canaan named Beth-Shemesh (house of the sun), in which the sun was revered as a deity (Josh. 15:10; 19:22, 38). Jericho was likely named for its worship of the moon as a god.

Joshua called for the Israelites to reject idol worship. Many of the polytheistic cultures of the ancient Near East practiced idolatry, in which they kept household idols as representations of the gods themselves. Joshua confronted Israel, commanding them to put away such idolatrous practices. Unlike the surrounding peoples, the 12 tribes had no option to include Yahweh in their pantheon. Choose the one true God or choose other gods. Make a decision; take a stand.

Jesus addressed the issue as well, teaching on monetary wealth as an idol. No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and your accumulated possessions. You will end

up loving one and hating the other. If Jesus is your Lord, there are no other masters. When you serve your employer, you do it to serve Christ (Eph. 6:6-7, 9). When you study a subject, you study to show yourself approved to God (2 Tim. 2:15). When you honor an authority, you honor the One who grants authority (Rom. 13:1-3).

### Make the Commitment (16-18)

When confronted by Joshua the people immediately responded positively. Of course we will serve Yahweh. After all, He led us out of Egypt. He demonstrated His power and presence through His mighty works. He made the way for us to settle in this Promised Land. We will serve Yahweh, for He is our God.

They had all the right answers. They knew their history. They knew their heritage. They knew to give honor to Whom it was due. Unfortunately, knowing and doing are often unrelated. James warns believers: "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Would the Israelites follow through with their commitment?

### Count the Cost (19-25)

Imagine the following scenario: a pastor extends the invitation at the close of his message. He invites listeners to trust Jesus as their Savior and Lord. In one accord, the congregation voices their commitment to follow Jesus. Now the pastor further challenges them: "You cannot serve Christ. You are incapable of following Him." "But we will," they plead. "If you fail to follow Him, you are witnesses against yourselves," the pastor responds. "We are witnesses, and we will follow Jesus."

This scenario reflects the events of Joshua's farewell address. Joshua calls Israel to decide, they respond, he confronts them and they further commit to follow Yahweh. Joshua then provides a written witness in the Book of the Law, followed by a memorial stone as a reminder of their covenant to follow Yahweh. Verbal affirmation is not enough. We must count the cost and follow the Master.

## Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

### FREE

### John 16:5-15

Many believers would confess that their notions of the Holy Spirit are decidedly hazy. Yet neglect of the person and work of the Holy Spirit can lead to distortions in our understanding of Christian experience and the purposes of God for the life of the church.

The breadth of teaching contained in John's Gospel on the person and work of the Holy Spirit should lead us to be dependent upon His ministry for personal and corporate spiritual vitality.

### The Counselor is Sent (5-7)

John's unique word for the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete. Different Bibles give various translations for the word such as encourager, advocate, comforter or counselor. The word literally means "someone called alongside so as to help."

Our Lord speaks of Him in John 16 in the context of the disciples' distress over the fact that Jesus is about to leave them.

The word that John uses for grief occurs on three other occasions in this chapter (vv. 20-22). Yet Jesus tells His disciples the fact that He is leaving will actually bring them a closer experience of the presence and power of God in their lives through receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will make the presence of Jesus even more real to each and every believer.

As the Spirit of grace, He comes as a gift to God's people (Acts 2:38). Before we are given any particular gift of the Spirit we are given the Spirit Himself as the source of all the rest, and the emphasis in the New Testament is on the sheer graciousness in the heart of God in "pouring out His love into our hearts in the gift of the Spirit."

### The Counselor Reveals Our Need (8-11)

In particular, Jesus focuses on the initial work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith. He works mysteriously in our minds and hearts, convincing us of our need to turn to Christ for salvation. In particular, He con-

victs us of our "sin, righteousness and judgment to come." It is in this sense that He is often spoken of as the advocate, a legal figure who comes as a prosecuting attorney bringing evidence to show us how far we have strayed from God's laws, how much we have rejected His love and how perilous is our condition.

In convicting people of sin the Spirit shames us, convincing us of our guilt and calling us to repentance. Yet His ministry is never meant to leave us in despair but to graciously bring us to the point where we recognize our need and so turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and experience His grace, mercy and forgiveness.

If this work of bringing people to faith in Christ as Savior is the work of the Spirit, then believers are called to pray that the Holy Spirit might work through the testimony of parents, Sunday School teachers and preachers. It is only when the Spirit takes our frail witness, often communicated in weakness and fear, and uses it to bring people to know God that we can have the confidence that God's word will not "return to Him void."

### The Counselor Points to Jesus (12-15)

Jim Packer has described the ministry of the Spirit as being similar to floodlights that never draw attention to themselves but focus all energy on the building to which they are directed.

John V. Taylor speaks of "God working anonymously and on the inside: the beyond in the midst ... He is always the go-between who creates awareness."

The awareness the Spirit creates is of the glory and grace of the Lord Jesus.

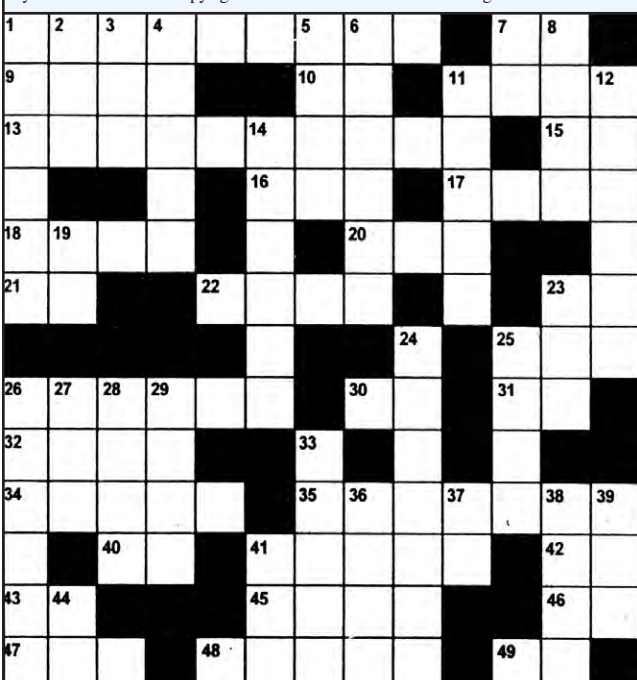
Vladimir Lossky writes, "The divine Persons do not themselves assert themselves, but One bears witness to Another."

The Spirit of God does not look for personal advantage to promote Himself but rather to focus our attention on the Lord Jesus who brings us into a relationship with God the Father.

The Alabama Baptist will not publish an issue July 5. Sunday School lessons for July 8 will be available at [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org).

## Christian Crossword

By Valerie Barrett Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**
- The \_\_\_ said unto the younger. (Gen. 19:31)
  - The kingdom of \_\_\_ king of Bashan. (Num. 32:33)
  - He had \_\_\_ in the grave four days. (John 11:17)
  - A greeting.
  - Hear I \_\_\_ you, ye sons of Levi. (Num. 16:8)
  - A faithful \_\_\_ is health. (Prov. 13:17)
  - Nothing: \_\_\_ro.
  - Lord shall \_\_\_ to me another son. (Gen. 30:24)
  - \_\_\_ the son of Nathan. (2 Sam. 23:36)
  - With the \_\_\_ of the sword. (Gen. 34:26)
  - Bored a hole in the \_\_\_. (2 Kings 12:9)
  - Even \_\_\_ the tongue is a little member. (James 3:5)
  - \_\_\_, the beloved physician. (Col. 4:14)
  - For, \_\_\_, the wicked bend their bow. (Ps. 11:2)
  - Blessed are ye that \_\_\_ beside all waters. (Isa. 32:20)
  - Achar, the troubler of \_\_\_. (1 Chron. 2:7)
  - Went forth to \_\_\_ into the

- land. (Gen. 12:5)
- \_\_\_ that time the Lord said. (Deut. 10:1)
- \_\_\_ the son of Kish. (1 Sam. 10:21)
- Speak anything \_\_\_. (Dan. 3:29)
- And \_\_\_ her brother said unto her. (2 Sam. 13:20)
- The dove found \_\_\_ rest. (Gen. 8:9)
- Filled with the \_\_\_ of the ointment. (John 12:3)
- And if thy oblation \_\_\_ a meat offering. (Lev. 2:5)
- \_\_\_ sinful nation. (Isa. 1:4)
- Brought them unto \_\_\_ to see. (Gen. 2:19)
- Which perished at \_\_\_ dor. (Ps. 83:10)
- An abbreviation for the third book before the New Testament; also an old, ugly woman.
- \_\_\_ it in their hearts. (Jer. 31:33)
- Offerings of the Lord made \_\_\_ fire. (Lev. 24:9)
- \_\_\_ (Ex. 3:14; 2 words)
- They smote him under the fifth \_\_\_. (2 Sam. 4:6)
- Shall this man be a \_\_\_ unto us. (Ex. 10:7)
- Jemuel, and Jamin, and \_\_\_. (Gen. 46:10)
- I will now put forth a \_\_\_ unto you. (Judg. 14:12)
- Whether poor \_\_\_ rich. (Ruth 3:10)
- Baldness is come upon \_\_\_. (Jer. 47:5)
- I will break the \_\_\_ of your power. (Lev. 26:19)
- Feathers with \_\_\_ gold. (Ps. 68:13)
- But \_\_\_ ministered before the Lord. (1 Sam. 2:18)
- In his word \_\_\_ I hope. (Ps. 130:5)
- One \_\_\_ for the Lord. (Lev. 16:8)
- This great fire will \_\_\_ us. (Deut. 5:25)
- As he was about to \_\_\_ into Syria. (Acts 20:3)
- The vision of \_\_\_ the son of Amoz. (Isa. 1:1)
- A shortened name for the ninth book of the Old Testament.
- Let this \_\_\_ be under thy
- hand. (Isa. 3:6)
- The Lord \_\_\_ will be a refuge. (Ps. 9:9)
- Of Manasseh, \_\_\_ the son of Susi. (Num. 13:11)
- And there went over a ferry \_\_\_. (2 Sam. 19:18)
- It hath consumed \_\_\_ of Moab. (Num. 21:28)
- My son, \_\_\_ my voice. (Gen. 27:8)
- O ye sons of \_\_\_. (Ps. 4:2)
- And all that handle the \_\_\_. (Ezek. 27:29)
- \_\_\_; and he smelleth the battle afar off. (Job 39:25)



## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

### Court rules to dissolve Islamist parliament in Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt — Christians in Egypt welcomed a June 14 court decision to dissolve the Islamist-controlled parliament because of election irregularities.

The decision offered hope for Christians, many of whom were convinced the country was about to be handed over to Islamists who would stifle religious freedom and persecute non-Muslims.

“Christians are happy, because they were afraid the Muslim Brotherhood was taking over the parliament,” said Athanasious Williams, a Coptic Christian human rights lawyer in Egypt and a leader within the Egyptian Social Democratic Party.

In the 2011–2012 elections for the People’s Assembly of Egypt, political parties competed for two-thirds of the body’s total 508 seats. Candidates unaffiliated with any political party, also known as “farmers” or “workers” candidates, competed for the rest.

In reality many of the “independent” candidates ran as party members.

On Thursday the Supreme Constitutional Court in Cairo ruled that the “independent” candidates who had been sponsored by political parties had been seated unconstitutionally. The entire assembly will be dissolved.

The results of parliamentary elections shocked many Christians throughout Egypt, with parties affiliated with Islamist groups winning 71 percent of the seats in the People’s Assembly.

An increase in attacks against Christians and church buildings after the Jan. 25–Feb. 11, 2011, revolution, combined with the ever-changing rhetoric from the Islamist parties on the subject of Islamic law, had caused anxiety among Christians in Egypt.

Along with the decision to strike the parliament, the court also ruled to allow Ahmed Shafik, the last prime minister of former President Hosni Mubarak’s regime, to continue running for president. Shafik, despite his connection to the old regime, is seen by many Christians as a preferable option to Mohammed Morsi, the candidate fielded by the Muslim Brotherhood.

### Lao police arrest local pastor for sharing faith

PEEYEUR, Laos — A 53-year-old Lao pastor remains behind bars after Lao police arrested him June 6 for encouraging others to convert to Christianity, a spokesman from the group Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom (HRWLRF) confirmed.

The arrest of Asa, identified by only a single name, took place around 4 p.m. at his home in Peeyeur village, Luang Namtha Province, according to HRWLRF.

Police then drove Asa to the Luang Namtha provincial prison, some 31 miles away — too far to allow visits from concerned family members or friends who have limited access to road transport. If normal procedure had been followed, HRWLRF said, police would have held Asa in a village or district prison for three days while they investigated charges against him.

On June 7, Khamla, a prominent Christian leader in the province, met with police and discovered that Asa had been charged with leading people to Christ. Two years ago police forced Asa to sign documents agreeing that he would neither proclaim Christ nor lead people to Christianity.

This year, however, many people in Peeyeur and surrounding villagers, touched by Asa’s life and testimony, have accepted Christ. Authorities in southern Laos have also continued to threaten, interrogate and arrest Christians.

# Staying in step

## Longtime friends share ministry path, graduation date

By Melissa Gerrish  
Correspondent to TAB

The moment symbolized years of hard work and sacrifice, but it was also a reunion — of sorts — for two Alabama Baptists when they graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on May 12.

Barry Cospers, director of missions for Tallapoosa Baptist Association, and Clarke Skelton, pastor of Valley Grande Baptist Church, Selma, first crossed paths at Samford University in the 1970s.

Cospers graduated in 1974 with a bachelor’s degree in religion and a minor in business administration. Skelton followed just two years later in 1976 with a bachelor’s in religion and a minor in speech and drama. The duo took religion classes together and were active in intramural sports and the Samford Ministerial Association, Skelton said.

“I have always had the utmost respect for Clarke as a friend and Christian,” Cospers said.

After graduating from Samford, Cospers worked as an accountant for a little more than three years. During those years he and his wife, Cathy, visited three seminaries before deciding on Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Skelton and his wife, Anita, immediately went to Southern after graduating from Samford in 1976. Cospers and Skelton graduated from Southern in 1980 with master of divinity degrees.

During seminary, Cospers pastored New Liberty Baptist Church, Owen County, Ky. Skelton served First Baptist Church, Henryville, Ind., as student minister, and Cross Plains Baptist Church, Cross Plains, Ind., as pastor. After graduation Skelton continued to serve as pastor of Cross Plains Baptist for another year and briefly enrolled in Southern’s doctorate in evangelism program.

### Degrees deferred

Cospers began to serve as pastor of churches in Alabama. He attended Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., working on a doctor of ministry (D.Min.) degree in prayer and church growth.

He completed the course requirements for the degree but not the doctoral project.

Skelton and his wife started Lakeside Baptist Mission, a mission of Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. “Shortly after beginning our tenure at Lakeside, Anita



Photo by Anita Skelton

**LIFETIME FRIENDS** — Barry Cospers (left) and Clarke Skelton (right) have been classmates for their bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees — the latter two degrees being 32 years apart.

and I felt that God was renewing our calling to international missions, which He had given to both of us several years earlier,” Skelton said.

“As a result of God’s leading, I withdrew from the doctoral program at Southern Seminary and decided I would probably pursue a D.Min. degree in evangelism when God opened the doors for that study in the future.”

After a 15-month process the Skeltons were appointed as representatives of the International Mission Board in 1985 and served for the next 15 years in South Korea.

“During our 15 years, I often asked God if the time was right for me to pursue my D.Min. degree; but each time because of ministry and family considerations, I decided that God was not yet opening the door for me to pursue that degree,” Skelton said.

“We were blessed to be Southern Baptist representatives to South Korea for 15 years and God gave us a fruitful ministry and many wonderful Korean friends there.”

However, after 15 years of ministry in South Korea, extended family health issues brought the Skeltons back to the United States in 2000.

To their sorrow, Skelton and his wife realized they had lost touch with many old friends.

“I was very surprised how many people that I had considered close friends before we went to Korea stopped communicating with us altogether. I grieved the loss of several significant friendships from my Samford and Southern Seminary days during our years in Korea. But I remember that Barry always kept in touch with us,” Skelton said.

“Whenever I was in the U.S., I clearly remember how Barry al-

ways took time to ask about our work and our family experiences so that he could stay in contact with us and pray for us,” Skelton added.

“God used them greatly in South Korea,” Cospers said. “Our friendship reconnected after Clarke and his family moved back to Alabama. Clarke was a very effective pastor with a zeal to honor God and to see people come to Christ,” Cospers continued. “Clarke has a Kingdom heart.”

### Reunited again

After becoming a director of missions, Cospers decided he wanted to finish his doctoral studies in denominational leadership at New Orleans.

Cospers did not realize that he and Skelton would again be graduating together until a few weeks before graduation.

“I found out when the doctor of ministry office sent out a communication email that included the email addresses of students graduating,” he said.

Although Skelton had always intended to pursue his doctoral studies since withdrawing from the program in 1981, because of God’s leadership and family needs he completed his studies 31 years later.

He received his diploma wearing his father’s doctoral robe.

“My father, I. Cole Skelton, received an honorary doctoral degree from Samford University in 1980. He was given a doctoral robe by his brothers and sisters when he received his degree and he passed his robe on to me before his death in February 2006,” Skelton said. “I was honored to be able to wear my father’s robe when I received my doctor of ministry degree on May 12.”

**Citizenship**  
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Reuters photo

Webb Simpson of the U.S. lines up his putt on the 14th green during the final round of the 2012 U.S. Open golf tournament on the Lake Course at the Olympic Club in San Francisco, Calif., on June 17.

# 'Passionate Pursuit of Jesus'

## US Open winner Simpson 'humbled,' vocal about faith

**A**tense finish to the U.S. Open may have been difficult on Webb Simpson's emotions, but it was a boost to his prayer life. "I probably prayed more the last three holes than I've ever done in my life," Simpson said after winning the tournament June 17. "It helped me stay calm and get in with 2-under [on the final day of the tournament]."

Simpson finished at 1-over for the tournament and left the course without ever holding the lead. But Jim Furyk and Graeme McDowell faltered in their own final rounds, leaving Simpson with his first major title. He watched from the clubhouse as McDowell missed a birdie putt on the 18th hole that would have tied Simpson.

"He knows that his hope is not in golf," said Ryan Carson, student pastor at Forest Hills Church, Charlotte, N.C., where Webb and his wife Dowd are members. "He knows that his hope is in the Lord, and that perspective, I think, has really kept him grounded."

Carson told Baptist Press that Simpson is not someone "who just calls himself a Christian then just attends church."

"He's got a passionate pursuit of Jesus going on," Carson said.

"It's something that is really contagious. He steers conversations back to the Lord, back to Scripture, back to experiences that he's had with the Lord or that other people have had.

"He's passionate about it," Carson continued. "He's not just a nominal Christian. He's truly got a life that wants to honor and serve Jesus."

Last year, after his first PGA Tour victory at the Wyndham Championship in Greensboro, N.C., Simpson said he'd "be stupid not to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, because it was tough out there and I was nervous, and I felt His presence all day."

On June 17, after winning the U.S. Open, Simpson took to Twitter to offer his gratitude.

"Thanks to everyone for the support and encouragement," he wrote. "Humbled to win the US Open!! Thankful to God for His grace in my life." A few days earlier on Twitter, Simpson notified his followers that "I'm going to tweet a lot about faith, Jesus, Bible. Also, I'm going to tweet about golf and random stuff."

The 26-year-old Simpson trailed by four strokes going into the final round and was in 29th place after two days — making him the first golfer ever to move from that far back to win the U.S. Open.

A native of Raleigh, N.C., Simpson attended Wake Forest University where he studied religion.

"He loves the Lord," Simpson's brother-in-law, Graham Keith, said about him in a PGA Tour video. "He tries to do everything he can when he plays on the golf course to glorify the Lord. To him, it's more about how he can use golf to reach other people."

In the same video, Dowd Simpson said the love of Jesus Christ pours out of him.

"He's so full of joy and life and energy," she said. "I think people like being around a guy like that." (BP)

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### National Geographic show challenged by Hutterites

KING RANCH COLONY, Mont. — Hutterite bishops said a new National Geographic reality series that follows the members of a rural Montana colony gives a "distorted and exploitative version" of life inside a little-known Christian sect.

The controversy led Hutterite bishops to issue their first-ever press release, said Canadian journalist Mary-Ann Kirkby, a one-time Hutterite who is working with the bishops in Montana's King Ranch Colony.

The June 14 statement, issued by three Hutterite bishops, accused the National Geographic Channel of presenting a "distorted and exploitative version of Hutterite life that paints all 50,000 Hutterites in North America in a negative and inaccurate way."

The 10-episode "American Colony: Meet the Hutterites" follows the 59 members of the King Ranch Colony, showing them drinking, swearing and shooting guns, all in violation of the sect's pacifist and pietist Christian beliefs.

National Geographic said the show captures this rift in presenting "a truthful representation of the struggle between the younger generation and the colony leaders."

"King Ranch has had its challenges keeping the faith, so it was a very vulnerable people to begin with," said Kirkby, the author of the 2010 memoir, "I Am Hutterite."

Arising out of the Anabaptist reformers in Moravia (modern-day Czech Republic), Hutterites faced continual persecution for their beliefs in adult baptism and pacifism.

In the 1870s, 18,000 Hutterites traveled to America and settled mainly in Canadian provinces and in Montana and South Dakota.

There are now an estimated 45,000 Hutterites in North America, living in 462 colonies.

### Evangelicals push Congress to pass immigration plan

WASHINGTON — Evangelical activists are pressing Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform plan — a tricky election-year issue that conservatives' GOP allies have been reluctant to take up.

The so-called "Evangelical Immigration Table," which includes evangelicals Jim Wallis on the left and Richard Land on the right, unveiled its plan June 12 on Capitol Hill.

Citing a biblical call to protect the stranger living in a foreign land, the statement on immigration reform signed by 140 evangelical leaders urges respect for immigrants' humanity while obeying the rule of law and providing for national security.

Though the group is reaching out to evangelicals, Congress and the president, there is not yet a specific framework in place.

"Much, much work remains to be done on the specifics," admitted Tom Minnery, senior vice president of Focus on the Family. "As difficult as it was getting all these signers together, the next step, getting politicians together, is a much greater task."

Wallis, president and CEO of the social justice organization Sojourners, said change will depend on evangelicals uniting together for the cause.

"Big things don't change in Washington first. They change in the nation's capital last," he said. "Together we will create a national groundswell for comprehensive immigration reform."

Evangelicals could comprise a huge voting bloc, representing 26.3 percent of all Americans. However, recent polls show jobs and the economy are voters' top issues influencing their vote for president.

### Study challenges tax exemption for religious institutions

TAMPA, Fla. — How much money does the U.S. government forgo by not taxing religious institutions? According to a University of Tampa professor, perhaps as much as \$71 billion a year.

Ryan Cragun, an assistant professor of sociology, and two students examined U.S. tax laws to estimate the total cost of tax exemptions for religious institutions — on property, donations, business enterprises, capital gains and "parsonage allowances," which permit clergy to deduct housing costs.

Cragun and his co-authors — Stephanie Yeager and Desmond Vega — examined federal tax exemption laws, and some state and local laws, specifically in their home state of Florida. They conclude:

- ▶ States bypass an estimated \$26.2 billion per year by not requiring religious institutions to pay property taxes.
- ▶ Capital gains tax exemptions for religious institutions may be as much as \$41 million a year.
- ▶ U.S. clergy may claim as much as \$1.2 billion in tax exemptions annually via the parsonage allowance.